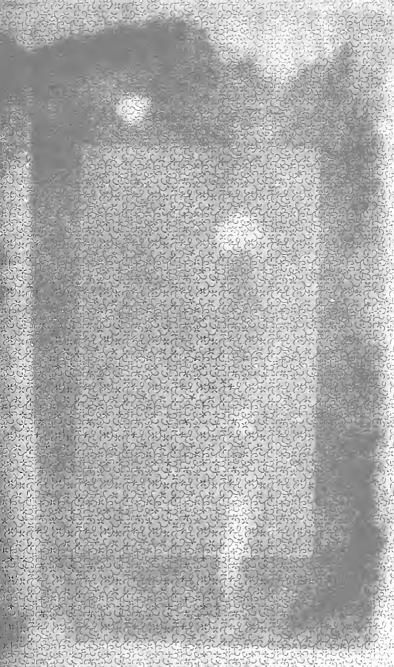


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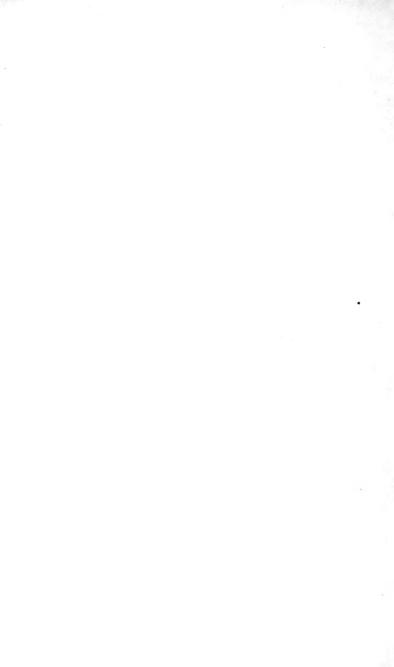


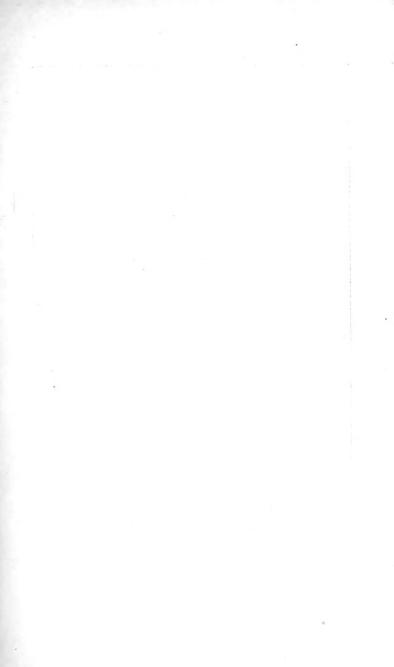
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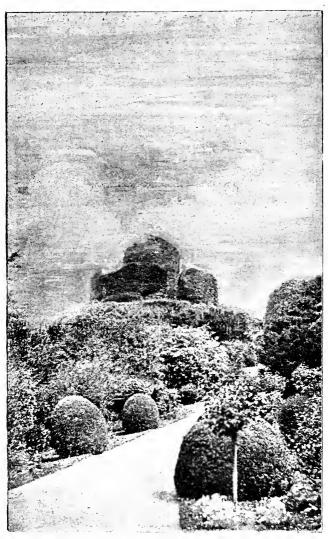




### ZENOBIA MARSH.







"DEAR OLD CASTLE! HOW MANY HEARTS WHEN FAR AWAY TURN TO THEE LOVINGLY."—PAGE 48.

# ZENOBIA MARSH.

## A Cornish Joyel.

#### By EVAN MAY,

AUTHOR OF "PHILIP GREYSTOKE," "MUCH IN A NAME,"
"GREATEST OF THESE," &c., &c.



#### LONDON:

W. NICHOLSON & SONS, LIMITED, 26, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, E.C., AND ALBION WORKS, WAKEFIELD.

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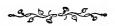
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## ZENOBIA MARSH.



#### CHAPTER I.

#### SCHOOLDAYS.

LIFE is opening o'er a pathway,
Which rough stones do cumber sore,
Will the youthful feet grow weary
E'er they reach that farther door?
Rather may they—heaven grant it—
Firmer tread with courage true,
Daily count some trial vanquished,
Daily hope and strength renew.

"DRAT the childer! Drat 'em, I say! I do believe as how they was born wi' out one ounce o' sense a'tween 'em, that I do! Here you, Zedekiah, you! Be this the way you swill down the yard-place? Just you start right away, and do it over again this minute, or else it'll be the worse for ee, mark my words."

The speaker who glowered ill-humouredly through her spectacles at the yard, where the blue slate pavingstones really were in a flooded condition, was a genuine specimen of the fast dying-out, old fashioned servant, whose term of service lasted very frequently from early youth to advanced age, and whom all looked on as one of the family. Lydia, it cannot be denied, had her faults, often troublesome ones, but, though cross-grained and dictatorial, she was true to the core, and thoroughly trustworthy; unfortunately, however, she was one of those who, while faithfully performing their duties, too often ruled the house, Mistress included, with a rod of iron, accompanying their not really unwilling service by a large amount of perfunctory grumbling.

She was growing elderly, with thin face lined and seamed, like a "Mary Daw" apple hoarded to the point of perfection, and could not work so continuously as of of perfection, and could not work so continuously as of old, though woe be to the unlucky wight who ventured to say so in her hearing. Her iron-grey hair, brushed smoothly down on each temple, concealing the ears, was covered by a spotless, close fitting muslin cap, the narrow plaited border of which had been carefully goffered; fine muslin strings were tied in two prim bows beneath the pointed chin. Her eyes, of cold steely blue, were not easy to evade. Her nose was long, and slightly hooked; the lips thin, and compressed, with scarcely any curve to modify their stern pressed, with scarcely any curve to modify their sternness. Her tall angular figure was clad in a stuff gown of dark, uncompromising brown; no qualifying adjective was required to designate the colour of any garment belonging to Lydia; she would have nothing whatever to do with shades and tints. Round her shoulders a white muslin "turnover" was neatly pinned in position this bright autumnal afternoon, and a spotless apron to match concluded her visible apparel. Stay though; her really shapely feet were encased in cloth shoes, and these thrust into a pair of "pattens," enabled her to cross the wet space from the kitchen door to the playground wall in comfort.

On the other side of this wall some score or more boys of all ages, were disporting themselves as only boys can when just released from school. Running, jumping, shouting, turning somersaults, and playing practical jokes on each other, entirely regardless of danger to limbs or clothes. It is pandemonium! Fortunately, out of doors, and far enough from human dwellings,—save the Master's house—to be as little of a nuisance as possible.

As Lydia, approaching the wall, raises her shrill voice that it may be heard above the din, a tall youth, who, for the last ten minutes has been careering round the field with a small boy mounted on his shoulders, abruptly drops his burden, and comes to a standstill opposite her, saying with a slight pucker of his dark brows—

"Well, Lyddy, what's the matter now?"

"Matter enough, I think! Just do as I say; swill this 'ere yard again. It's a disgrace to a able-bodied lad, that 'tis."

"But I did'nt swill the yard to-day. 'Twas'nt my turn."

"Rubbish! Not your turn, faith! If you didn't do it you ought to 'a done, that's all I say. Come, set to work, or I'll tell the Master—I declare to goodness I will!"

"Very well, tell him then! Bert Hockin' did that yard to-day, and if it's got to be done over again, he must do it; I sha'nt. I've finished his work for him a deal too often as 'tis."

"You refuse, do you? We'll see then, that's all;" and Lydia, stiffer than before, recrossed the wet space meditating a stern vengeance; while the lad, a look of determination settling on his mobile features, turned

away to find, if possible, the real culprit, almost tumbling over the child, who, in hopes of continuing his interrupted ride, still lingered near.

"I say, Zed," he queried, "what's up now? Lyddy

got one of her tantrums on again, eh?"

"Where's Bert Hockin', Nathan? Have you seen him anywhere about?" Zedekiah questioned.

"No;" replied the child, shaking his head. "Never

mind Bert, I want another ride."

"I can't stay now, Nat. Bert's got to be found."

"Bother Bert; I want a ride, I say!"

"Then you'll have to want it. Now it's no use making a baby of yourself, crying won't better things. You shall have another ride after tea if I've time."

Apparently agreeing with the wisdom of his friend's philosophy, the child, as Zedekiah ran off at full speed, in pursuit of a figure he had caught sight of across the field, dried his eyes, and walked slowly away; pouting, it is true, and kicking the stones from his path in decided ill-humour.

But, as Zedekiah Peardon is to be one of the principal characters in whose fortunes I hope you will be interested before our story concludes, it is quite time that you knew something about his external appearance.

Look at him, as his long legs cover the ground so fleetly; he, in company with several of his companions, is clad in a peculiar garb, which, on his tall figure, has a somewhat grotesque effect. Over rough knitted grey socks, his feet are shod with strong hobnailed shoes, more calculated to wear a long time than look elegant. His trowsers are of coarse dark-green corduroy, with a narrow piping of red on the outside seam; the jacket, which reaches but to the waist, is of strong dark blue cloth, but this is only visible just

now in the very centre of the back, for, over all, is a long holland apron, high at the neck, and with sleeves buttoned at the wrist, which reaches to well below the knee. Rather an unboyish garment, against the infliction of which many of the wearers at first enter a vigorous protest; uselessly, however, for this especial costume is one of the things warranted to alter not, in connection with the ancient charity, from which these boys derive the benefit of a free education, combined with board and clothing, for a term of years; and on their leaving school, this is supplemented by each receiving a useful outfit, and being apprenticed to the trade at which they individually appear most fitted to excel. The intention of the Founder was a noble one, and many a prosperous business man looks back, with gratitude, to Barwell's School, where the foundation of his fortune was laid; but, as concerns the lad of whom I am writing, his gratitude, at present, is mingled with a very large share of discomfort, for his lines have by no means fallen in pleasant places.

Under the most favourable conditions, it is never, I should imagine, particularly comfortable to be the recipients of charity in an otherwise ordinary boarding-school. Young people of both sexes understand perfectly well how to assert any fancied superiority they may possess, and many of the lads here were no exceptions to that rule. However, without tremendous friction, Zedekiah and his six or eight companions could generally succeed in defending themselves, and holding their own pretty well in this direction; for he, at least, was, intellectually, far the superior of any fellow pupil. But of late years the head-Mastership had fallen into hands utterly unfitted to hold the reins of government. Hence, very frequently, an almost unendurable kind of chaos reigned, the great mass of

the discomfort usually being borne by the lad in question, who, in addition to being the oldest "charity boy," was no favourite with Mr. Marsh.

But, during this long digression, he has found the defaulting Bert. What a handsome lad he is! Look at him. There is not, in the whole field, a finer head of hair, or a more animated face. His glossy curls are flung carelessly back from a broad forehead,—which testifies to the possession of latent power, if it be only rightly used,—beneath it a pair of sunny brown eyes glance defiance at his companion, whose own countenance is cast in a much more grave and thoughtful mould. For Zed—as he is familiarly called—is consciously preparing for his speedy emancipation, and longs to join the great army of the world's workers.

Truly though, the lad has already worked for long years, and that to an extent which has thoroughly tested the metal he is made of.

"I say, Bert," he exclaims, "Lyddy is in a fine wax about the yard. She says it must be done over again. Come along, I'll help you. There'll be time enough before tea if we're sharp."

"I shan't;" Bert replies, pettishly shaking off the detaining hand. "I hate swilling; what's wrong with the yard?"

"Well you did leave it horribly wet, you know."

"I don't know anything of the sort. Anyhow, I'm not going to do it again, you bet."

"You'd better, that's all I say. There'll be a row else."

"Do it yourself, then. Work and you agree better than it do with me."

"No, Bert, I shall not. I have been too easy in doing your share so frequently. It's high time I

stopped, for your own sake. What'll you do when I'm gone, I wonder?"

"Oh, shut up, Zed, do! What a donkey you be, for sure! Always preach, preach, preach! You'm past bearing sometimes, that you be!"

"And preach I shall, so long as you always try to lay your burdens on other folk's shoulders. I tell you, Bert, it's nothing short of cowardly, so there!"

"So, I'm a coward, am I? I like that! There isn't another in the school would say so, after the licking I gave that big bully, Pierce Penwarden, last week! There, I'll not listen to another word you say; and as for the yard—I don't care whether it gets swilled or no; I'll not do it!" and bounding away, his handsome head might presently be seen the centre of a noisy distant group. Possessing an abounding stock of vitality, and an insatiable appetite for mischief, the kitten-like nature with which he was endowed rendered Bert Hocking a general favourite, even though innate selfishness usually enabled him to shift his rightful share of work or blame on to some one else.

Meanwhile, little Nathan, the youngest boarder, who was something of a pet with his companions, while kicking sullenly at the stones in his path, felt his head suddenly enveloped in some soft material, and immediately commenced a vigorous struggle to free himself, striking out in all directions.

The girl who had captured him held him fast, however, notwithstanding all his efforts; but a moment later, laughing merrily, she liberated his angry little face, and, raising the child in her strong young arms, placed him in a wheelbarrow standing conveniently near, and, starting off at a gallop, pushed it before her, watching until a ripple of laughter broke over his sulky

features; at the first appearance of which she as suddenly stopped short.

"Oh, don't stop, please, Zennie, don't stop;" he ex-

claimed. "That was jolly."

"Was it? Well then, here goes. Just one more turn, no more, mind, and you mustn't look so much like a thunder cloud again. I declare I hardly knew you just now!"

Oh how bonny she was! that sweet North-country word just described her. Long sunny curls, which seemed to catch and hold veritable sunbeams in their rich abundance, dressed, in the fashion of the day, row above row, and hanging loosely on either side of her face, without any intervening comb or ribbon.

Just now, her large eyes, of deepest, purest blue, are brimming over with merriment; and a goodly array of pearly teeth are displayed. On the matter of her nose Zenobia Marsh is slightly sensitive, for its saucy little tip has a tendency to become tip-tilted, and her youth-ful ladyship has no admiration for that necessary adjunct to a face, unless it happens to be purely Grecian. Her rosebud of a mouth and daintily rounded chin, however, amply balance any deficiency, and go far to make her animated countenance an altogether loveable one.

She wears a plainly-made but spotlessly clean ging-ham frock just high enough to cover her shoulders, but leaving a large space of plump white neck visible; while the pretty rounded arms are not encumbered with anything more in the form of sleeves than a deep lace-edged puff, which leaves the dimpled elbows exposed to view. Those dimples, by the bye, were a source of much discomfort to their childish owner; how she hated to have them remarked on! Her long sturdy legs are clad in white stockings, and the low shoes have elastic sandals crossing on the instep. She is supposed to be wearing a large white sun-bonnet, but that has fallen off long since, and at the present moment an inquisitive fowl, with an inquiring turn of mind, is examining it curiously and meditatively, in a manner which is not at all calculated to improve its appearance. Zenobia has wheeled the barrow the whole length of the gravelled path now, and, on returning to the starting point perceives what is happening to her property.

"Oh my bonnet!" she exclaims, with a shriek which sends the startled bird scurrying away emitting an

indignant "squawk."

"Now then, shan't I come in for a scolding, that's all! You horrid speckle, why couldn't you let it alone? Get away with you! Ugh! You nasty thing! There's the tea-bell, Nathan; run away and wash your hands, or you'll be late. What a grubby little fellow you are! How do you get them so dirty?"

From all quarters, as the large bell issued its iron summons, hungry lads hurried towards the house; but the yard, though somewhat drier, was still unpleasantly covered with pools, and Lydia, boiling with rage, grimly waited to secure her victim.

"So, Zedekiah Peardon," she exclaimed as he appeared, "You set me at defiance, do 'ce? Well, we'll see which has got most power here, you or me. Will

'ee do that there yard?"

"No; it's not my turn-you know that."

"Then I go speak to the Master."

"Very well, Lyddy, I can't help that."

Most of the lads were seated at table, the ordinary boarders at the head, while the other lads took a somewhat lower position, and the Master, after a rapid glance to see that all were in place, was just commencing to utter a perfunctory, gabbled blessing on the meal, when Lydia, not waiting for him to conclude, stalked to his side, saying—

"Please, sir, be I to get obeyed by these 'ere boys,

or baint I?"

"Eh? What's that, Lydia? What's the matter now? Obeyed? Who's been disobeying you? Speak up, woman; come be quick, I can't wait here all night."

The keen, fierce eyes, of whose glances most of the lads stood in extreme awe, looked at the woman, and then travelled rapidly round the table, as though seek-

ing a culprit.

"It's that Zedekiah Peardon. He won't do a thing I tell him, so I said as how I'd come to you, sir."

"Peardon, where are you? Stand up."

Zedekiah had entered the room just after his foe, and was quite aware of the storm which would probably burst on his head; yet he exhibited no symptom of fear, as, at the Master's command, issued in a loud, almost bullying voice, he stood erect in his place.

"Oh, there you are, are you? What does this mean? Since when have you chosen to do as you

please, eh?"

"I'm quite ready and willing to do my own share of work, sir: but I'm tired of doing other people's as well," was the firm reply.

"Tired! I'll see about that; and give you something to get tired for into the bargain! Be off with you and do what Lydia requests this moment."

But the boy did not move.

"What!" thundered Mr. Marsh, "you defy me? Then I'll just make you. We'll see who rules here."

"Very well, sir;" the lad replied in the same calm tone, as he prepared to obey. "I only go under compulsion. I'd rather suffer an undeserved punishment, than I'd be the coward who consents to see another driven to perform his own neglected duty;" and he flashed, as he spoke, a haughty, indignant glance at the real culprit, on whom it was unfortunately lost, for his eyes were consciously lowered.

"You impertinent rascal! I've a good mind to kick

"You impertinent rascal! I've a good mind to kick you out! When you have done, instead of returning, write me a hundred lines of long letters; perhaps that will help to cool your pride a little. Pride! What's a beggarly charity-lad to do with pride, I wonder?"

With head erect, and tongue silent, though a torrent of bitter thoughts clamoured within for an outlet, Zedekiah obeyed; wiping away a furtive tear on his long linen sleeve when beyond observation.

Injustice, from which he had suffered pretty largely in his young life, always tried his patience beyond all things. However, to-day there was unexpected comfort in store for him.

Zenobia, who overheard the angry command of her father, hurried at once to her mother's side, and enlisted her sympathies for the sufferer; so that when, with a bursting heart, the lad had finished the work, which Lydia watched him perform in triumph, and was slowly proceeding to the schoolroom, Mrs. Marsh tapped softly on the window of her own little parlour, and beckoned him, with a smile, to wait while it was being opened.

The cloud on our hero's face cleared as by magic, when he caught sight of the gentle face beaming on him. How wonderfully his countenance is capable of lighting up! Who would believe that so much latent animation lay concealed behind those quiet, regular

features? And, though he cannot have read or heard much about the days of chivalry, no knight ever held richly caparisoned steed reined beneath his lady's window, who possessed more of its spirit than he evidenced when he kissed, with loving reverence, the thin white fingers with which she held towards him a thick slice of yellow saffron cake. Evidently Mrs. Marsh has won the heart of this poor boy, and it is a heart well worth winning, having a capacity for unquestioning devotion very true and real.

Mrs. Marsh was an invalid, who bore on her pure, quiet face, traces of more than one fierce battle fought and conquered; lines of suffering, physical and mental, had impressed themselves deeply on the broad white brow; but the peace of a heart resting at length was written above them all.

Smiling brightly as she gently withdrew her hand, and let it rest for a moment on the boy's head, she said tenderly—

"Thee art in trouble, this child tells me. I am very sorry to hear it. Try to be patient, and do the right thing always, my lad."

"I do try, Mrs. Marsh, I do indeed, and really am not at all to blame this time. You believe me, don't you?"

"Ay, without question. I do not think thee would tell me a lie. Now go and do thy lines; I would not make thee more unhappy through this delay."

"Oh, I don't mind a bit, now, not one bit;" replied Zedekiah, as he ran off cheered and comforted.

"It's a shame, mother dear, just a horrid shame;" exclaimed Zenobia, as she leant through the window to give him another smile. "Poor old Zed is always coming in for somebody else's punishment, all through

his not being a sneak. I wonder he doesn't run away. I'm sure I should!"

"What, and leave thy mother, little one?"

"Oh, no! no! Of course I couldn't leave you! But then Zed hasn't got a dear mother to pet him, and make up for everything. There isn't another in the whole school as clever, and as kind as he is. I believe it's all jealousy."

Mrs. Marsh laughed softly.

"Dost thee think Zedekiah Peardon imagines himself to be possessed of anything of which another could possibly be jealous?" she queried. "And yet," she continued, as though thinking aloud, "I believe he has, in very truth, a most enviable possession; it is borne in upon my heart that the dear lad is a King's son; one of our Father's 'little ones.'"

Zenobia was about to reply; but, laying her hand across the girl's lips, her mother whispered—

"Say no more now, dear; I would not have thee anger thy father, and I hear his footstep."

Mrs. Marsh's sensitive face coloured faintly, as her husband, who was evidently still ruffled in his temper, which at best was not the most placid, flung open the door with a jerk which tried her nerves, and remarked harshly—

"Come, Anice, how is it that this idle girl is not at her lessons with the rest? I'll have no excuses in the morning."

"The child will soon get her tasks ready, Edward."

"She had better. Daughter or no daughter, she must learn to obey, or I'll know the reason why. So get to them at once, do you hear? And if they are not thoroughly learned it will be the worse for you, remember that."

Mrs. Marsh opened her lips to remonstrate, but did

not speak; and after a few more grumbling remarks, as he watched Zenobia prepare to obey him, he again left the room, and presently the house.

As his step echoed down the long flagged uncarpeted passage, his wife said, smoothing her little daughter's curls lovingly—

"Now, my pet, if thee and me set-to about these tasks, we will soon make an end of them, won't we?"

Zenobia's heart was swelling high with anger, and the kind word, instead of soothing, brought a torrent of tears.

"Oh, mother, mother," she sobbed; "I feel so wicked. I do believe I almost hate father, there!"

"Hush, hush, my little girl; mother's own comfort does not mean anything of the kind; of that I am quite sure. Come, dry thy eyes, and let us forget all about unpleasant things."

It was growing dusk, as, an hour later, a girlish figure passed noiselessly through a small side door, and, glancing round that she might make quite sure of being unobserved, sped fleetly away to a small plantation just across the road, and was only visible now and then, a bright spot among its dim weird shadows. Here, in a tiny hollow, between the outstretched branches of an aged, partially decayed, ivygrown oak tree, she carefully placed a folded paper, and, darting back again, was soon safely ensconsed in her own cosy room.

The dusk had not quite given place to dark when another figure approached the same tree, and placing his hand in the opening, drew out, with apparent satisfaction, the paper it contained.

What could the manœuvre mean? Was Zenobia, the free schoolgirl, happy in her mother's love, already

carrying on a clandestine correspondence with some would-be lover? Impossible!

Oh no; the solution of the puzzle is a very simple one—childishly simple. Zenobia cannot, no she *cannot*, try as she may, work the difficult sums her father insists on setting her; so Zedekiah, delighted to be of assistance, has hit on the present plan. She places the questions in this convenient post-office, and, after their solution, he conceals their answers there as well; so far, detection has not taken place, and her tribulations of late from this source have been of remarkably infrequent occurrence; for which relief the girl's gratitude is unbounded.

The danger of being sometime found out adds, of course, an exciting element to the affair, but Zedekiah is beginning to doubt whether there is any real kindness in such assistance, and to plan in his own mind some method of giving more true aid. But no such thoughts worry Zenobia; what girl of her age has not a spice of romance in her composition? This little maiden's head, at any rate, is full of strange Cornish stories, dealing, in a gloriously vague fashion, with Knights and Ladies, pixies and fairies, jumbled up in the most delightful and inextricable confusion, and in her fancies Zedekiah has been endowed with attributes of which it would have surprised him greatly to be told.



#### CHAPTER II.

#### ZENOBIA IN DISTRESS.

"OUR strength grows out of our weaknesses. The indignation which arms itself with secret forces does not awaken until we are pricked and stung and sorely assailed.

EMERSON.

THAT Zedekiah might have had a less enthusiastic champion than his master's daughter was clearly shown on the following day. Zenobia's mornings were very frequently divided between study and attendance on her suffering mother. Therefore no opportunity occurred to the busy little maiden of relieving her bottled-up indignation-which only grew more intense by repression - during the long morning. Bert was not to escape, however; the rebuke which she considered he richly merited, came upon him in full force soon after the noon recess commenced. As usual, the lad had shirked his morning's share of duty. but this time Lydia had pounced on the true culprit. and, instead of running wild as he longed to be, Zenobia discovered him indulging in a solitary game of skittles in an outhouse, while the knives which he was supposed to be cleaning lay unfinished at his side, and at once made for him, like a young whirlwind.

"What a coward you are, Bert Hocking," she cried. "Ugh! Just fancy anyone who was worth his salt sitting still and watching another punished for his fault, without saying a word to stop it! I believe I almost hate you, that I do! There you are, at the same sort of thing again. You shan't get Zed into

trouble this time though, no matter what you do. I'll take good care of that."

"I can't help it; Zed's a born fool. Why couldn't he speak up for himself, I wonder; like anybody else would ha' done?" muttered the lad.

"Speak up, indeed! You ungrateful, cowardly boy! What are you made of: Don't you know by this time that Zed couldn't do a mean thing? But there, you do know it, and that's why you let him in for it so often; because you know he won't turn round. Oh, it is no use hanging your head and pretending to be sorry just to me, not the least bit; if you really are ashamed of yourself as you ought to be, go and beg Zed's pardon. You'll find a difference, I can tell you, when he is gone; there'll be no one then to endure a caning to save your back, you'll see!" and Zenobia—in whose opinion all the lads longed to stand well—turned and walked away, after almost annihilating the boy with a parting flash of utter scorn from her great eyes.

Very reluctantly the scholars obeyed the summons of the school bell that afternoon, for the experiences of the morning had not by any means inspired them with a desire to encounter a repetition of the storm which had then reigned.

Mr. Marsh, who in past days had been a capital teacher, and who was still capable of doing efficient work if he could only control his violent temper, had been in one of his furious rages, when, as often happened, the cane was scarcely out of his hand during the hours of study, and hardly a lad among them all felt himself secure from becoming, at any moment, the subject of unwelcome attentions.

Zedekiah Peardon, who for some inscrutable reason was his master's most frequent butt, generally fared

badly on days like these, and the present had proved no exception. Of late, indeed, it had been growing well-nigh impossible to bear calmly the illusage to which he was so constantly subject; for how easily might not the tall lithe lad have retaliated? Many of his fellow pupils thought his refraining from doing so little short of cowardice. But Zedekiah knew that, unless he could succeed in keeping a good character during the remainder of his school term, his whole future career might be blighted by one moment of forgetfulness; and he had ambitions—ambitions of such daring and extent as frequently astonished himself by their force, though all such thoughts were kept closely locked up in his own breast.

With this dread continually before him, the lad opposed nothing as a rule, but proud silence, to whatever might be said or done, thereby frequently irritating his tormentor into the commission of yet greater cruelties.

But it was hard work, and often, as on this morning, very difficult to hold the passion which surged within him under control.

Now, as the lads one by one entered the long room and each seated himself quietly at his desk, he was already at his place and hard at work, finishing the long imposition which had followed on a recent caning; these impositions were his greatest trials, for what end could possibly be gained by writing page after page of an unmeaning jumble of long letters? If it had been something which he could commit to memory, he would not have minded the punishment nearly so much, but to work, until his arm dropped from sheer weariness, at worse than nothing, was annoying in the extreme. Why could he not be given some problem to solve? Something which would tax other

powers beyond those of mere endurance? he wondered. Mr. Simmons, the Usher, had not much difficulty in preserving quiet during this usually chaotic half-hour, for which he was not at all sorry, his own head aching to distraction as he battled with a hopeless longing to spend this sultry afternoon reclining at his ease on a grassy bank in some shady wood.

Zedekiah's pen was still travelling rapidly over his nearly finished pages, when Zenobia entered in her father's wake, by a side door near his own seat. He had not raised his eyes hitherto since his fellow pupils began to assemble, but now his head was lifted, in time to catch a gleam of pitying comprehension from the girl's eyes as she passed, which abundantly compensated him for all he had suffered. Zenobia did not appear very frequently in the large schoolroom, but this afternoon was especially devoted to writing, so she took her place with the rest, and profited so well by the lessons that her round, clear, well formed characters were the wonder and envy of girl acquaintances.

It was soon apparent that the lion had calmed down a little, and was content for the time to do his roaring in a less uncomfortable fashion. So, as the hours wore on, the children—not a few of them big ones—began to breathe more freely, and to vary the monotony by some sly pranks, mainly intended to attract the attention and arouse the latent love of fun in their girl companion.

Who can wonder that so bonny and bright a lassie as the master's little daughter should be a general favourite with her father's pupils? Hardly one of them could be found who would not gladly perform any service she might require at his hands, no matter at what personal inconvenience it might be done. Even the most clownish of them all, those who affected

to despise girls, somehow sooner or later fell under Zenobia's spell.

The small maiden was by no means ignorant of her power, either, but swayed her sceptre right royally, distributing her favours so impartially that none dare boast—at least in her hearing—of having been specially honoured. If any unlucky wight did make such a mistake he speedily found himself sent to Coventry.

There are surely an unusual number of odd specimens of boyhood gathered here; many of them rude, uncouth youths, who, until, in most cases much against the grain, they found themselves resident here, had seldom been so far away from the dear home-farm, situated either in some solitary spot on the bleak moorland, or nestling in a lovely wooded valley among the Cornish hills. They were not all ungentle, however; far from it; though rugged in manner, and inelegant in garb, not a few of these farmers' sons would, if tested, put to shame the boasted gentlemanhood of city-bred and polished youths. They were frequently also found capable of studying to thorough advantage; and the usual school-boy rivalry was by no means absent here.

To the majority of them the little sleepy town—which woke to spasmodic life once a week, when the farmers, with their wives and daughters from many a mile round, drove in to do their weekly marketing—appeared to be a busy bustling city; and its old world streets, and quaint shops, nestling 'neath the shadow of the grey old castle's crumbling walls, offered attractions of the most exciting character.

But even these lads, who, many of them, in their distant homes had played on perfect equality with the children of their fathers' labourers, soon learned to hold

themselves proudly aloof from the "Charity boys," whose peculiar garb, combined with their rougher housing, marked them as a class apart.

Zedekiah had long since learned not to care for this distinction, being quite cute enough to perceive that the unsightly aprons, more frequently than not, clothed the cleverest and brightest scholars. So what did it matter?

Bert Hocking, the next to himself in age, was not so philosophic, however, and often chafed passionately against the position he held; escaping as frequently as possible from performing the duties which fell to his share in the matter of boot-blacking, knife cleaning, coal fetching, etc., which offices he and his companions were expected to perform between them.

Poor Bert! After all, the lad really was to be pitied, in spite of his grave faults, or rather, because of them; for he had inherited pride, and laziness, with his handsome face, and winning manners, from the fascinating, but neer-do-well father, who, after capturing his girl mother's heart, broke it without any compunction, and soon rode gaily away, leaving her to bear the brunt of shame and suffering, the result of misplaced faith, on her own weak shoulders, and—as alas! many a poor foolish girl has had to do-brave the world and struggle to maintain herself and child alone, or as poor Alice did, quietly sink into an early grave under the bitter disgrace. Hence the boy started in life under the twofold disadvantage of being orphaned and branded as baseborn. Yet he had never met with the ill-treatment usually meted out to such unfortunates; the old grandmother to whose care he was left, for her daughter's sake, whom she had loved with passionate intensity, was kindness itself to the helpless baby, though, had she possessed the power—in the existence of which she thoroughly believed—of "ill-wishing" her enemy, things would have gone even worse than they had done with her child's false lover. As Bert grew older his handsome face won its way into most people's hearts, and procured him many a gift from the neighbours; his very admission into the school being a boon to which he, strictly speaking, had no claim. Unfortunately his beauty was but the mask of a selfish nature, which needed only opportunity to develop in all its hideousness, and hitherto no effectual curb had been brought to bear on his tendencies. By some means he had even won the favour of his stern teacher, who, strange to say, was the only person he feared.

Mr. Marsh was very seldom indeed heard to utter anything in praise of the Charity scholars, though he often found the elder ones extremely useful in lightening his own labours. Certainly he taught them, and well too; it was not his fault if they did not enter, thoroughly equipped, on the battle field of life; but he was paid for doing it, and pretty well kept up to the mark by the trustees who had charge of the funds. As for treating the lads in any sense on an equality—that was too much to expect; and his gentle wife's tender heart was often overladen with sympathy for the children who seemed to lead such shaded lives. Nevertheless they appeared to thrive pretty well, notwithstanding the harshness to which they were so frequently subjected.

The afternoon had almost reached its close, and the shadows thrown by the branches of a grand horse-chestnut tree near the entrance porch were lengthening across the floor—for, on this hot day, the door stood open, emitting a busy hum from the long, oppressively close room—when, for some occult reason of his own, Mr. Marsh suddenly summoned Zenobia to his side,

and placing before her a series of difficult sums in compound fractions, desired her to work them there and then, before resuming her seat.

Poor Zenobia! Though during the last week probably a dozen of these sums had been given her for solution, and duly returned correctly answered, how to set about them was a complete mystery, entirely unsolvable by the dismayed child! It needed but a glance at the expression of consternation which crept over the mobile features as she took the pencil he held towards her with reluctant fingers, to confirm her father's suspicions, if anything had aroused them; but he pretended not to notice it, proceeding with his interrupted occupation of examining the copy books brought for inspection, on which he bestowed words of grudging praise, or scathing satire, before again dismissing the writers to their seats.

Zedekiah, who was assisting the usher with the younger children, had not noticed Zenobia's unhappy position, and was startled on approaching the desk, to meet her beautiful eyes, which were raised to his face, wet with hopeless tears. Neither dare speak, but in deaf and dumb characters, which both understood, she rapidly told him the cause of her trouble, and he as speedily promised to assist her by some means, though how, he could not think.

The last scholars had been dismissed, even the very dull ones who were usually detained to complete some unfinished task, escaped to-day; but, try as she would, not a single problem could Zenobia succeed in solving of the array before her, when, with a scathing expression of countenance, her father, taking the slate from her, said—

"Not done, I see. Just as I expected. Very well, go to your mother now. But, to-morrow morning at

an early hour I shall unlock this desk, and, before the ordinary duties of the day commence, all these sums must be correctly worked by you, unaided,—do you hear?"

"Yes, Father."

"Then see that you obey, or I'll know the reason why;" and having secured the terrible slate in his own desk he left the room, taking no apparent notice of the girl's evident dismay. Do children ever reason as to the effect of their actions, and consciously practice self-control for the sake of one they love? Not very frequently perhaps; but that, at eleven years of age, Zenobia Marsh had acquired the difficult power, and could bring it into practice, was very apparent, when, soon after, she entered her mother's room with a face all sunshine, and a manner as bright and merry as though no dreaded ordeal were present in her mind. It had been a stiff battle with the child, to whom a solitary skirmish with her father, when she was sure, as in the present instance, to come off disastrously, was the most terrible thing which could happen. But arithmetic was not her mother's strong point; the assistance she so gladly rendered in her little daughter's studies failed here; so, before presenting herself in the sufferer's room, our little heroine had decided that, as any mention of her trouble would only worry Mrs. Marsh unavailingly, she should not be told anything about it; hence her bright manner, and happy appearance of freedom from care.

Any one watching the two together would be at no loss to discover where the child had obtained her sunny disposition. Mrs. Marsh was suffering acutely, the sultry heat of the day having tried her to a great extent; but nothing of that was apparent in the smile she turned towards the opening door.

"Mother darling, I do wish you could go out; don't you think you might manage just a little way? it is so pleasant under the trees;" said Zenobia, kissing the white face, and smoothing the throbbing temples.

"Not to-day, my pet. I could not endure the movement. Never mind me. Thee art looking so bright that it makes me feel better just to see thee!"

The child laughed and shook her head, as she threw herself on the floor by her mother's couch, and silently fondled the hand from which some light work had fallen; it was a rare thing for those thin fingers to be unoccupied, and hardly a poor home in the parish was without some treasured evidence of the gentle lady's taste and industry.

Mrs. Marsh was no morbid, fretful invalid; though she suffered more continuously and severely than anyone realized, her husband least of all. But the most acute agony arose from the secret consciousness that he, whom she still loved with a passionate self-abnegation, which few who only knew the quiet exterior she presented to the world, would have deemed her capable of cherishing, was the cause of her continuous pain and helpless prostration. It was all the result of an angry blow, dealt by him when the gin, of which he imbibed too freely, had gained complete mastery over his easily ruffled temper. She often wondered whether he knew that her suffering, which would cease but with her life, was traceable to that act. Could it be that this consciousness, preying on his mind, was the cause of his growing irritability?

Mother and daughter were always perfectly happy when together, spending many hours in contented silence; one busy with her studies, and the other working some dainty lace, or manufacturing a garment, which would be sure to look both suitable and tasteful when adorning its blue-eyed wearer. A tender caress, or loving smile exchanged now and then, satisfied each.

"Mother," said Zenobia, after a pause, "things didn't go well with Zed, poor old fellow, this morning, and I'm nearly sure that he had no time for dinner. Do you think he might go home for a treat this evening? He does so love to, though I'm sure I can't think why. If you gave him leave, nobody would interfere. I should have liked to take him some cake after school, but I think he feels too big for that now."

"Does he? Or is that just thy fancy, my romantic little girl? However, you may tell him that I shall have a note to send to the town after tea, and that he need not hurry back with the answer. Will that do?"

"Oh yes, mother dear; only—couldn't I take it just as well?"

"I suppose thee could; but that would hardly be the same thing, would it? Besides when thy tasks are done I shall want thee to fetch me some butter. Suppose Mrs. Metherell were willing to spare Pollie tomorrow evening to drink tea with thee, should you like to have her?"

"Oh, you darling, splendid mother. That's a lovely plan;" cried Zenobia gleefully, jumping to her feet.

"Come, dear, don't quite smother me, even in gratitude;" laughed Mrs. Marsh, loosening the child's clinging arms, which were clasped round her neck. "Run away with thy message to Zedekiah Peardon; by the time thee returns tea will be ready, I expect."

Tearing through the kitchen in her wildest fashion, heedless of who or what might be in her path, Zeno-

bia's speed was suddenly arrested by an exclamation from Lydia, who happened to be in one of her worst moods.

"Now then," she cried, "a body might think they'd got a young whirlwind indoors with you about! What ever for do 'ee go banging through the place thickey fashion, eh?"

"I'm looking for Zed, Lyddy. Let me pass, please."

"Zed again! Drat the chiel! Whatever is there in yon lanky, sulky loon to keep 'ee always trapesing after his heels? I declare to goodness it beats me what you see in 'im! Anyhow, he's busy now, so you just bide where you be."

"Zed's not sulky, Lyddy. It's you who are unkind to him. And I'm not always with him either. It's mother who wants him now."

"Eh, what's that? Who does mother want?" enquired the gruff voice of Mr. Marsh, who, crossing the hall, heard the altercation.

"There, you nasty old Lyddy, you are a mischief maker. Why couldn't you let me alone?" muttered the girl, sotto voce. "I was only going to send one of the boys on an errand for her, father," she continued aloud.

"One of the boys? Why can't you go?"

"I am going somewhere else, father."

Lydia opened her lips to speak, but Zenobia whispered quickly—

"Don't make any more mischief, Lyddy! Why will you be so cross?" then, as her father's footsteps slowly receded, slipping past the woman, she continued her quest.

"Mischief indeed!" muttered Lydia. "What next, I

wonder? Why couldn't the chiel say that her mother wanted the lad, first go off?"

Zedekiah did not lose much time in presenting himself as requested, and, after performing his errand as speedily as possible, ran fleetly home to make the most of this rare treat of a leisure evening. True the old grandmother with whom he had lived before entering the school, was very deaf, and almost totally blind, but then that prevented her needing much entertaining, which, under the circumstances, the boy felt inclined to consider an undoubted advantage.

She welcomed him with a long list of complaints, but he soon silenced them by presenting the biscuits Mrs. Marsh had sent—the old woman was particularly fond of these delicacies, the sender knew—and after chatting a few moments as she munched with toothless gums, mounted the narrow stairs leading to his old attic bedroom; there from a corner cupboard he drew forth a number of books and pamphlets, all more or less dilapidated, but which nevertheless were the lad's most treasured possessions. They were profusely illustrated, in queer lines and curves, wheels, knuts, bars and hinges, all which go to the formation of mechanical implements, large and small, simple or complex.

Carrying his treasures downstairs, Zed was very speedily so deeply engrossed in studying their contents, making drawings for himself, etc., as to become altogether oblivious to the flight of time; until, with a start, he discovered it to be not only growing dark, but that the Church clock was booming forth the hour of nine.

"Confound it all!" he cried. "I'm in for it again! What an unlucky chap I am!" bundling up his papers, he hastily consigned them to their hiding place, and,

kissing his grandmother good-night, raced away at full speed.

"Zed, you donkey, what made you stay so late?" somebody whispered, as he slipped in through the side door noiselessly opened for him.

"Is that you, missy? I clean forgot the time, worse luck."

"Well, if you are awfully quiet now no one need know. Here, give me mother's note, and slip upstairs this minute. Good-night."

He would have lingered, but she sped away with a finger on her lip, and, kicking off his thick, noisy shoes, Zed stole silently to the dormitory, and succeeded in undressing himself without attracting any notice, thanks to the fact that his own bed was in a dark corner near the door.

But how comes it that Zenobia was still on the alert, in this early household, seeing that it was more than an hour beyond her usual bed-time?

When she returned from her visit to the friendly farmhouse, where clotted cream, and bread of the sweetest, had tempted her to linger and enjoy herself as long as she could, while arranging with her friend Pollie how they would spend to-morrow's half holiday, the tutor, who was standing at the entrance, told her that Mrs. Marsh had retired, complaining of greater suffering than usual.

So the loving little daughter—whom experience had developed into quite a clever nurse,—had, while listening for her boy friend's step, been employed in trying to soothe the agonized nerves which so frequently made the gentle sufferer's life one of keen torture.

Now, however, the pain had somewhat abated, and

as her father had come in a few minutes since, judging from the noise he made, not in the best of moods, she kissed her mother good-night, and was soon cosily nestled in her little white bed.

#### CHAPTER III.

#### ZEDEKIAH'S NEW DEPARTURE

N EITHER Zedekiah or Zenobia slept as soundly as usual that night; the former striving to arrange in his mind some method of assisting the girl in her trouble, and she, poor child, being possessed by a nightmare of dread which would perhaps appear incomprehensible to an older person.

The sun aroused her soon after six o'clock, and, dressing rapidly, she descended softly to the silent school-room, hoping to find that her father's desk had, by some fortunate chance, been left unlocked.

Not so, however; and, baffled, she turned away ready to cry; but a moment later exclaimed joyfully—

"Oh, Zed, is that really you? Whatever are you doing?"

"I'll show you in a minute, missy. It's ever so early, that's one blessing. See here—" his eyes glistening triumphantly as he came towards her—" I've been trying to hit on a plan for showing you how to do these sums right easily, and I don't think you can fail to understand now."

Zenobia shook her head.

"No," she said, "I never shall manage them, I know. I've tried heaps of times before, and they won't come right."

"Well, now, just you try again. We'll take this one first, and sitting down beside the child, he patiently and gently explained figure by figure, until she had succeeded, much to her own delighted wonder, in working one simple problem unaided. Then looking up gratefully into his glowing face, she said—

"If they are all as easy as that why haven't I been

able to manage them before? It makes me feel quite

silly!"

"It was my fault for not thinking of showing you in the best way. You will be able to manage another now, don't you think so?"

"I'll try, anyhow. Set me a harder one this time."

Earnestly the two young people worked away, until at length, as the large clock on the staircase struck seven, and sounds of decided action reached them from the distant kitchen, Zenobia sprang to her feet, and, stretching her hands high above her head, pirouetted the whole length of the schoolroom and back, emitting as she did so a low delighted whistle.

"I know them now, Zed. You dear old Zed. Father may set me as many sums like that as he pleases, and I'll work them, you'll sec."

"I believe you will. After all its just as well that we were frightened into doing this, for I've been thinking it was a bit mean, of me teaching you to deceive."

"Why you did nothing of the kind! Whoever heard of such a thing! It was every bit my fault, every bit. I don't feel at all ashamed, either; whenever people act unreasonably they are sure to get taken in, and it just serves them right. I'm very glad to understand the puzzling things for my own sake though; and I'll thank you properly some day, see if I don't!" she added, before bounding away, as he commenced his morning's duty of cleaning the littered floor.

If Zedekiah had not been unusually self-absorbed he must have remarked traces of the room having been entered at even an earlier hour, but he noticed nothing unusual.

Greatly to her father's surprise, Zenobia triumphantly stood the test of his much dreaded sums, and earned a reluctant commendation ere she escaped to her mother's room as the day pupils began to arrive.

"Fetch my keys," he called after her, "I left them upstairs."

One class was already called ere she returned, and with faces concealed by their desk lids two lads emitted half frightened giggles as she laid the keys in her father's hand.

A moment later the heavy lid was thrown back, and a resounding sneeze re-echoed through the room, another and another followed. Then between gasps, Mr. Marsh exclaimed—

"Bless my soul, what a cold I've got! Here, Simmons, come and take my place; I must get something to stop this at once. Begin this class."

But the tutor, obediently taking possession of the vacated seat as his principal—still sneezing violently—hurried from the room, on raising the "key" he needed, was himself attacked in the same mysterious manner, with even greater intensity. What *could* be the cause?

Smothering a laugh, Martin Bray remarked, with a wink at his companion—

"I am afraid you will need to retire as well, sir."

Another sneeze prevented any reply, and, raising an handkerchief which he had dropped into the still open desk, Mr. Simmonds buried his head in its capacious folds, as sneeze followed sneeze, until it became positively alarming. How his nose and checks burnt! he really appeared to be in a high fever! The tutor had, however, once before experienced the effects of strong cayenne when scattered broadcast, and recognized the odour. Dropping his handkerchief and leaving the desk as soon as he could speak, he said sternly—

"This will have to be explained, boys. Someone has been tampering here. The secret will out; so, whoever

is guilty had better confess at once."

"Muff;" whispered Martin under his breath, "catch me!"

"Hush!" said Jack Tresise, quaking with terror, "he'll find out, no fear!"

"Not he, unless you split. You'd better, that's all!"

"Catch me, by Jingo!"

Presently the fumes of gin announced the master's return, as usual he had sought restoration in his favorite beverage, and was, consequently, in a state of extreme irritation.

"I would not advise you to stand at the desk, sir;" remarked the tutor. "It is that which caused the sneezing attack!"

"The desk made me sneeze? Go to your post and talk no more idiotic nonsense. What next, I

wonder?"

However he speedily found that Mr. Simmonds was correct, and without wasting more words turned passionately to the accustomed corner for his cane. It was not there!

"Simmonds, have you seen my cane?"

"No, sir."

"Peardon, you were monitor. Where have you put it?"

"I left it in that corner as usual, sir."

"If you did, how could it have got away. Where have you put it?"

"Indeed, sir, I have not touched it at all."

What a scene ensued! The wildest pandemonium—an utter riot. The mad rage of the master, always easily aroused, was, when his alcoholic enemy held possession, decidedly his master. Of course, a substitute for the missing instrument of torture was soon forthcoming, and, as one after another denied all knowledge of the two mysterious occurrences, such an avalanche of unbridled anger descended indiscriminately on them all, as to set the boys' own hearts boiling, first against Mr. Marsh, and secondly against the unknown cause of their suffering. In vain Mr. Simmonds protested the utter uselessness of attempting to learn the truth by such means. The maddened man, whose face was still smarting, had got entirely beyond the possibility of controlling himself at all.

The quaking culprits wished from their hearts they had stayed quietly in their beds; this was no fun for anybody!

"Peardon, come here."

Zedekiah looked up, but concluded, from the really awful expression of his tormentor's face, it would be much wiser to remain where he was,

"Do-you-hear-me?"

"Yes, sir."

"And defy me?"

Descending from his post with a few rapid strides, he was at the lad's side, and, in an instant had dragged him over the form.

Jack could bear no more. Darting from his seat he rushed to the tutor's desk, and cried—

"Don't let him thrash Zed, Sir. Please don't!"

"How can I prevent it, my boy. The man is

mad, simply mad. Whoever is to blame should at once make confession."

Confess! Who among them all would have dared? Not the real culprits, assuredly! Mean though they both felt, and sincerely regretful, yet, to tell now! Why he would kill them!

But Jack, who was quite broken down, heard one resounding blow, and hid his face, shuddering. However, it was not repeated—Why?

Before he could turn round, thundering applause broke on the startled air, in which even the tutor himself joined; for the tables were completely turned. Zedekiah's tall figure was drawn to its full height; by a dexterous twist he had wrenched the stick from the master's hand, and deliberately breaking it across his knee into small pieces, threw it from him, and folding his hand across his breast, stood motionless facing his enemy, who was literally foaming at the mouth in impotent, voiceless rage.

Again and again a volley of cheers rang through the room; but the boy hardly seemed to hear it; after, as it were, measuring lances a moment, he turned and walked deliberately to the peg on which his cap hung, many of his companions whispering as he passed, "Well done, old Zed."

But he took no notice. It was almost noon, and Mrs. Marsh might have an errand for him, so he walked round to the back door, fulfilled one or two requests of Lydia's, and, after the other boys had dispersed, asking leave of none, made his way to the house of Doctor Tremaine, one of the school trustees.

The Doctor was just starting on an extended round, and would have excused himself, had not his own little son, who was relating the morning's experi-

ences at the children's early dinner, seen Zedekiah

approaching.

"Well, my lad, what's the matter?" cried the doctor, entering the hall. "You have had anything but a pleasant time this morning, Teddy tells me. What's it all about, eh?"

"Pepper, and a lost cane, sir. But I've no notion who's to blame. I did not come to complain, please

sir; but isn't it about time for me to be apprenticed?"

"I'm sure I can't tell. How old are you?"

"Turned fourteen, sir. Please if it could be managed I should be so glad to begin work at once. I'm sure it would be best all round. Mr. Marsh has never liked me, somehow."

"Oh come, we are all apt to imagine enemies at some time in our lives; try to bear up like a man a while longer. I will name your request at the next trustees' meeting."

"It is no imagination, sir. Over and over again I tell myself how much better things would be for all if I were away."

"Well, well, I'll see what can be done. Now I must be off, or my patients will be grumbling. Here Susy, give the lad a piece of that pasty. I'll be bound he's had no dinner. Now keep matters as smooth as you can, and something will turn up; take my word for it. Here Ted, you rogue, off with you. No 'mitching,' or more than the schoolmaster will be down on you, depend upon that, young man."

Teddy, of the rosy, freckled countenance, and curly red hair, reluctantly resumed his cap and followed Zed, who had disappeared, munching his savoury pasty with evident satisfaction.

The usual self-confidence natural to boy nature did not hold its own among those who slowly gathered in

response to the bell that afternoon. Any lads who had been able to impress weak-minded mothers, or indulgent papas, of their need for a little relaxation, were conspicuous by their absence, and sincerely envied by less fortunate comrades.

However, the gloomy anticipations of reluctant boys as to what the afternoon might bring were not realized. Temper and gin combined had united to lay their foe *hors de combat*, and a severe attack of gout held him an exceedingly restive prisoner in his gentle wife's apartment.

This was one of Zenobia's afternoons in school, and the peace which reigned under Mr. Simmond's wise but firm rule, proved a startling contrast to the morning's storm.

It wanted but a quarter to four, as frequent glances at the clock assured her, when the door which communicated with the house opened hastily, and the thin face of Lydia peered in. Glancing round with an anxious expression, she exclaimed—

"Where's missy? Oh there you be. Drat it all, come away this minute, now do 'ee."

The tutor looked up, scandalized at this unauthorized assumption of authority in his own domain, but reading by the woman's disturbed face that something was wrong, nodded his permission to the startled girl.

"What's the matter, Lyddy?" she queried on joining her.

"Matter! Matter enough, I'll tell 'ee! I declare to goodness if that there dratted man don't kill your blessed mother outright one o' these days, it'll surprise me!"

"Kill mother! Who? What a goose you are Lyddy, frightening folks out of their wits. What is it?"

Lydia seized her frock as she was starting for her mother's room, saying—

"Not there. No fey, not there! It's after the

doctor you must be, and that sharp."

"But Mother! I must know what's wrong with her!"

"Drat the chiel, nothing! Nothing but your father's temper; he's raving mad seemingly, so run, and for goodness' sake be quick."

"What did you frighten me for then? It's just too bad of you, Lyddy!"

Seizing her large straw hat, Zenobia bounded off, over the quaint old bridge, and up the hill, never pausing until, panting and breathless, she entered the doctor's gate and rang a violent peal on the surgery bell.

In the long delightful garden behind the doctor's house, where all varieties of old-fashioned flowers held high revel, being much preferred to their fashionable, but usually odourless modern rivals, a party of children of all sizes were chasing each other from tree to tree. One of them paused as the gate opened, and screamed—

"Lil, Lil, it's Zen!" and made a wild rush, with the others at her heels, to the porch; throwing her arms round the girl's neck in ecstatic welcome.

"Oh Vi dear, don't. I can't stay a minute. Is the doctor in, do you know?"

"Yeth, he ith," replied the tiniest toddler of all.

"Then run away and find him, Sep, will you? There's a dear boy."

Away went the fat legs, full tilt, to the back of the house, while Rose, just a year older, tried in vain to gain on him. "I say, Zen, what's up?" exclaimed Lily. "You look as solemn as a judge."

"Do I? Oh dear, I wish the doctor would come.

Father is ill."

"That all?" said Violet, unsympathetically. "I should think you'd be glad. I should if he were my father."

"No you wouldn't if he nearly killed your mother with his worrying."

But the jovial doctor had been discovered by his small seekers, and now came forward one clinging to each hand.

"Well Zenobia, my dear, what's the trouble? Why you look quite serious. What makes that usually sunny face so grave?"

"Oh Doctor, it's father. You'll come at once,

won't you?"

"Come? Of course I'll come. Here you scaramouches, off with you every one. Zenobia will have nothing to say to you to-day, I see. Yes Vi, you as well. Do you hear? Off I say. Sh!"

Quick as the girl had been, Lydia, in impatient anxiety, had despatched Zedekiah in pursuit, and

they met him on rounding the corner.

"Hello, you coming for me as well, my lad? The case must be serious, surely!" cried the doctor. "Here, wait outside a while, will you? I may need a messenger."

Touching his cap in silent acquiescence, Zedekiah, taking a book from his pocket, seated himself on the

step.

The tea-bell rang, but he paid no heed, and the meal was ended while he sat on absorbed.

At length he was startled back to the present by hearing someone say—

"Bless my soul, you here still, my lad? I declare I quite forgot you. Now you have lost your chance of tea, I suppose?"

"That is no matter, sir. Did you want me?"
"No, I am going home now. Stay though, I have something to come down, and the sooner it's here the better. Suppose you come with me and bring it back."

"Very good, sir."

"What were you reading? May I see?" queried the doctor as they walked away. "Mechanics? Is that how the land lies, eh? We allow the boys to choose their future occupation if possible, you know." "It's engineering I like, sir. Oh, if I might be an engineer. Do you think there is any chance?" "Um, I don't know. It's a little difficult in this

town; but not impossible, perhaps. We'll see about it, that's all I can promise."

"Thank you, sir."

"Do you know anything at all about the work?"
"Only from books, sir. I read everything I can

get hold of about engines."

When Zedekiah returned with the medicine, (a strong sedative,) Zenobia, whose patience had not been perfected by the long training in the school of experience which her mother had undergone, was perilously near losing all control over herself. She was not only warm-hearted, but also extremely high spirited, and *could* not in silence sit by while the vials of her father's senseless wrath were poured forth so lavishly on her mother's defenceless head. Only the pressure of that mother's hand had been powerful to restrain her scornful reproof hitherto.

Now, as Lydia, entering with the bottle and glass, jerked slightly the chair on which his foot rested, the

tortured man turned on her with a scream of rage, and the expression of a fiend, yelling out-

"You are a set of clumsy, heartless, uscless brutes; that's what you are! As for the physic. Get out of my sight with the filthy stuff! Ugh! I'll do some of you a mischief, see if I don't! Physic! What use is that, I'd like to know? If Tremaine had sent something for this confounded foot there'd have been some sense in it. Take the poison away I say, d've hear?"

"Edward, my dear," Mrs. Marsh expostulated gently. "Yah! Edward! Shut up, do. Who asked you to interfere, I wonder? It's one fool defending another. Not a pin to choose among the whole baggage!"

"Father! How dare you? How dare you speak to

mother like that? It's cowardly and wicked."

He turned his head fiercely to confront his daughter's fearless eyes, which glowed like live coals, and really appeared to be too much astonished at her temerity to make any reply at first. Then while her mother murmered "Hush my darling. Hush, there's a good girl;" he yelled out—"What, you dare to defy me, do you? A chit like you? Get out of my sight this minute! Do you hear?" making at the same time an attempt to rise, seeing which, the child promptly obeyed his command.

Turning to her mistress, Lydia remarked pityingly-"You'd best let me help you to your room, ma'am. You look awful wishy-washy. I'll see as how the master takes the stuff when you'm gone. Come do'ee now, there's a dear creature."

Zenobia was hovering about not far away, and, as her mother came slowly forward by the aid of a stick and the old servant's arm, mutely begged with tearful eyes, that she might take her accustomed post as prop.

But Mrs. Marsh shook her head with a wan smile; the afternoon had tried her so much that she felt too weak to depend on her child's aid, however willing it might be.

That night, after pressing passionate kisses on the dear white face, so gentle, yet so sorrowful in expression, Zenobia retired to her own little room, her heart burning with thoughts of the injustice which marred their lives.

She did not at once undress, but after moving about for a few moments in rather an aimless manner, extinguished her candle, and, drawing up the blind, curled herself up in the low window seat, with her hot cheek pressed against the pane, and let the quiet scene outside sink into her heart with soothing balm, calming by degrees its turbulent passion.

How sweet and peaceful the night was. Clear and still the distant stars shone down on the silent earth; very silent and still as far as Zenobia's surroundings were concerned. There was not enough wind to disturb the old elm's branches; even the rose-branches round her own window were not tapping as usual. Away beyond a few old houses, whose shadows to-night seemed almost as tangible as themselves, and across a green meadow, she could get a glimpse of the little winding river, circling along its pebbly bed and sparkling brightly when the moonbeams caught its tiny ripples; while high above the houses and gardens which clustered round its steeply sloping sides rose the hoary old ivy-grown Castle about which many a romantic story lingered, as though finding in its dark silent recesses a natural and fitting home.

Dear old Castle! how many hearts when far away turn to thee lovingly, and would fain climb once more to the topmost height of thy ancient crumbling walls;

or seek again, as in childish days, for mysterious subterranean passages, in the existence of which those who love thee firmly believe! Can any breeze be more delicious than that borne in from the distant sea, to play round the temples of those who, having scaled thy giddy heights, are enjoying the reward of their exertion in the view spread out before them?

Zenobia; however, saw nothing at first; merely gazing absently with tear-blinded eyes.

"Why," she thought, "if God loved her mother, did he allow her to suffer so much? Was it, could it be, that he did not hear or heed? Perhaps someone else was in deeper trouble than they were; and how could God be everywhere at once? It must surely be impossible. And yet—Mother said not. She said too that He did care; cared very much indeed; so perhaps, after all, He would make it all right some time; but, oh, it was hard."

Her tears were dried now, and the peace from outside had exercised an unconscious influence; she was sleepy too. So, descending from her perch, the child, kneeling at the side of her low white bed, with the moonbeams touching her hair to glistening gold, prayed that God would please take away her father's temper, and help him to conquer the love of drink which made him such a terror in their home. "I don't mind so much" she said, "about myself, I think I could bear for him to treat me even worse, and I do want to learn more patience, but Mother is so ill, and so gentle; please dear Father in heaven, can't you make him better to her?"

As she knelt there with the moonlight streaming on her bowed head, her whole frame was shaken by convulsive, passionate sobs, for she felt, if God did not hear and answer, where could she turn? And oh, life did

seem so difficult. Though the world was beautiful, very beautiful, what did beauty matter if always marred by suffering.

Gradually calm once more fell on the little girl's turbulent heart, and, slowly undressing, she crept into bed, and was very soon fast asleep, worn out by the strength of her varying emotions.

However "it's an ill wind which blows no one good." The schoolboys' trick and the master's passion, were instrumental in winning for Zedekiah the release he craved from what had become almost intolerable thraldom, and for Mrs. Marsh a certain amount of relief from pain.

Doctor Tremaine had brought an unwontedly grave face to what his children always considered the jolliest meal of the day, that evening, returning to their lively sallies absent or impatient remarks very unlike his usual style.

At length the comfortable looking dumpling of a wife, and mother, interfered, saying—

"Children, children, let Papa alone; cannot you see that he is thinking of something besides your affairs?"

"Oh dear, I wish he wouldn't then," murmured little Rose. "I'm sure my garden is a *very* important matter, and I *does* want to tell him all about it."

"Won't I do just for once? Suppose you presently take me to see it."

"That would be very nice, Mammy," replied the child doubtfully; "but I fink I want Papa's advice too."

His wife's merry laugh in response roused her husband from his fit of abstraction to ask—

"What's the joke, eh?"

"Oh our small Rosebud has a matter on which she

is seeking your advice; mine won't suit. It is not experienced enough!"

"It won't, ch? That only shows Rose's bad taste, I fear. What is it, little one?"

"Oh Papa, Rosey is only bothering about her garden, but you promised to get me a lark's nest to-day; did you?"

"No, Teddy, my man. I said I would if I could, I think. Didn't I? Come Rosey, no crying; we can't do with babies who are able to run about, you know. What would you say if Mamma began to cry every time she could not have just what she wanted?"

"Mother cry! What a joke!" screamed Violet. "I don't believe she knows how!"

"That's all you know," replied Mrs. Tremaine. "If any of you became very, very naughty, even the improbable might come to pass; so be careful."

"Well Rosey, what riddle have you got for Papa to solve?"

"It's not a riddle, it's a garden. My garden, Papa dear."

"A garden, eh? Come along then; you want a ride, of course. Now then Sep, my little man, here's a shoulder for you. Hold hard both, mind; clear the tracks there, sharp!"

It was fortunate for the next half hour that no crusty neighbour was within hail to be driven desperate by the din raised.



# CHAPTER IV.

# MR. MARSH AND DOCTOR TREMAINE.

EARTH'S fairest flowerets wither soon
But who shall say they die?
There must be for these spirits pure
A brighter home on high.

TIME, though it sometimes seems to drag on leaden wings, yet, in reality, flies with awful rapidity, brought round again and again a change of seasons, and with them, even in this quiet spot, many another change; and now, though as yet unrealized by those most concerned, a greater than all was impending. For some days Zenobia had gone about her daily duties with a listless, absorbed manner, and an unusually grave expression on her bright young face.

It was evening, and Lydia, who had for some moments been watching the girl furtively, came to her side, as she stood leaning against the open kitchen door, apparently gazing at the boys in the playground beyond, but in reality lost in thought.

"It's a fine night, eh, Missy?" the old servant remarked, knitting busily. "Frosts be over and done with at long last it seemeth; and I, for one, baint sorry. My, what a weariful winter it hath been for sure."

"Yes, I'm glad it's over, Lyddy, though I don't object to the frost. But—I want to ask you something."

"Ay, chiel, ask away."

Lydia strove to speak in an unconcerned tone, but she shifted her position uneasily.

Turning swiftly, Zenobia fixed her luminous eyes on the old woman's face, and said—

"What do you think of mother?"

"Think, chiel? What be I to think? What art driving at? Isn't the missus much of a muchness? A bit tired belike, but that's nought to be wondered at, no fey! Such a winter's sure to try sick folks."

"No, Lyddy; don't try to put me off, please. Tell me what you really think. She's more than tired I'm

afraid-oh so afraid."

Her breast heaved, while big tears rose slowly to her eyes, and fell heavily over cheeks which had a more delicate rose tint than they were wont to wear.

Lydia's gaunt bosom concealed a heart which was tender and true, notwithstanding her somewhat surly manner, and these two, mother and daughter, were dearer to her than any other being in the world; she could not bear to see either distressed.

"Nay, now, my dear chiel," she replied tenderly, "don't 'ee fret, now don't 'ee. Let's hope the missus 'll soon pick up a bit. Her's oncommon whist looking, there's no denying that; but then sick folk vary a goodish bit. Why you baint looking so's I like to see 'ee yourself."

"Oh, I am all right, I never ail anything. But—no, I'll not say it;" she muttered. "It can't can't be."

The fear in her heart she would not give words to after all. It was a vague dread now, to put it into words would make it so much more terribly real. Instead, rushing round the house and up the front steps, the girl shut herself into her own room; where, secure from interruption, she gave vent to her pent-up grief in uncontrollable sobs of utter agony.

Lydia wiped away a tear on her white apron as she watched her flight; and, shaking her head sadly, muttered—

"What was a body to say? Poor little maid, poor dear little maid. I be that sorry for she; I couldn't say how! Drat that man! He's worse nor the brutes, that's what he is."

Is he? Stay, Lydia, don't be too sure, or condemn too sweepingly; however strong may have been the temptation to form so adverse an opinion.

The blind in the Mistress's quiet parlour has been carefully lowered that she might secure all the rest possible during the afternoon; she had been troubled with such terrible nights of restless tossing lately, but, sometimes a little sleep visited her during the day. The face on the pillow was painfully wan and white, while the eyes seemed perpetually seeking for something they failed to find. To-day, thought had been too busy for sleep. Her quiet hands were folded; even the lightest employment was almost entirely beyond her power now.

Presently the door gently opened, and she raised her eyes to confront her husband's face, saying—
"I am glad thee art come, Edward. I want to

"I am glad thee art come, Edward. I want to talk with thee a little. Can'st thee spare me a few moments?"

"What a question, Anice! Of course I can. Anything troubling you?"

"Only our child's future. Dear, what will become of her, when I am gone? Who will guide and sympathize? There is Ned, too. Oh, Edward, forgive me, I must speak just this once; dost thee know anything at all of his whereabouts? My poor, erring, boy?"

The wail in her voice went like a stab to the man's heart, and he replied hoarsely—

"Gone, Anice? What do you mean? Where on earth are you going, I wonder? What the dickens have you got in your head now? As for Ned, the

young rascal, I know nothing of his movements. How should I?"

Her lips were trembling so much that she could scarcely control them; but experience had taught her that tears only irritated him past all patience, so, by a supreme effort of will, she steadied her voice, and replied—

"Death is coming at last, Edward; I feel it. For myself it will come as a welcome release. But I am anxious, oh so anxious, God forgive me, about my children."

"Death indeed! What next, I wonder? Do you feel worse, really worse, though? Confound that doctor! He's been criminally lazy in not making a cure of you long before now. I've a good mind to go up and tell him what I think of his conduct. I will too."

It was quite in vain for her to protest. Blowing up the doctor was something to do; so, kissing the white face, much more tenderly than was at all usual with him, Mr. Marsh hurried away.

Dr. Tremaine was in his garden, surrounded, as usual, by a tribe of noisy youngsters, the elder ones, it is true, rapidly leaving childhood behind them; but the rest reaching down to babyhood, by a regularly graduated scale — when little Septimus, now a chubby seven year old, pulling his coat, said—

"Papa there's Zennie's Papa; look, there he is."

"So he is! By George, what's the matter now, I wonder? Something serious to bring him here, I'm certain."

"Hullo! There you are, just as I thought, playing with babies, when other people, patients to boot, are dying; a nice doctor you are!" exclaimed Mr. Marsh, in growling tones.

"Dying? Who's dying?"

"All your patients, for all you care it seems! Ugh, arn't you ashamed of yourself?"

"Oh, come now. What's up, old friend. You do

not appear to be going that way at any rate."

"No thanks to you. Why haven't you cured my wife? That's what I want to know. Here she lies, day after day, getting weaker as each passes; any fool can see that, and you seem quite unconcerned. If I'd been a doctor, wouldn't I have moved heaven and earth to make folks better, that's all!"

"If you had been a doctor, you would have done no more than I have been doing, if as much; but what ails Mrs. Marsh to-day, more than ordinary?"

"Come and see. You ought to be able to answer

that question better than me."

"Very well, so I will. Wait a moment, we may as well walk back together. I want a word with you myself."

Re-appearing presently the doctor resumed,-

"You are not anxious without reason, about that gentle wife of yours. I have seen for some time how impossible it would be to keep her with us much longer."

"Confound it, man! Is that all your physicing amounts to? Just to be able to say when people are going to quit; without trying to make them better? If you don't understand your own business, send for some one who does; that's all I've got to say."

"I am quite willing, should be glad in fact, to have further advice. But I warn you it will be of no use. Mrs. Marsh will never be better in this world."

"I'll not believe it. 'Pon my word, I'll not. It's monstrous; simply monstrous."

Zenobia spied the two men, as they crossed the bridge in earnest conversation, and, with the perpetual fear in her heart intensified a hundredfold, flew at once to her mother's room; was she worse? If so, why were they keeping the fact from her?

The placid smile with which she was greeted, served to calm somewhat her agitated feelings; and, taking one thin white hand in her own plump ones, she sank, without a word, on to a favourite low seat at the side of the couch: while with the other Mrs. Marsh played lovingly with the abundant glossy curls, still flowing, in their natural grace, round the girl's shoulders. Not much was said as she sat there, now and then a murmured word broke the silence, while Zenobia pressed passionate kisses on the hand she held.

Presently Mr. Marsh and the doctor entered the room, the former hastily, with eager, impatient manner. But the doctor retained his usual calmness, and was ready with a cheering word.

Zenobia sought the latter's face, on her own an expression, combined of fear, and something which looked like menace, mingled with passionate pleading; as, in reply to a whispered word from the gentle sufferer, she rose to leave the room.

Doctor Tremaine smiled at her reassuringly, as he held the door open, then, turning to Mrs. Marsh said—

"Come, come, what's all this I hear? You are not so well, and never sent for me. Isn't that a mistake, eh? I think so. Come tell me all about it."

"Thee must know as well, or better even, than I do, doctor, and I am quite sure it is no surprise to you. I am growing weaker, that is all. Edward need not have troubled you now, I do not suppose thee can do anything for me."

"Then Edward thinks differently! Yes Anice, you must indeed consider me a brute, if you really imagined me capable of watching you die, (which I'll not believe you are going to do) without making some effort to save you!"

The patient read in the grave looks of her friend, and physician, that she had come to no erroneous conclusion though, whatever his lips might say; and smiled placidly at him, as, after asking a few questions, he bade her a quiet good-night; promising to send something which should benefit her for the time, when he reached home.

"Oh Doctor Tremaine tell me, please tell me. Is mother worse?"

Zenobia had been watching for his departing figure, and now waylaid him with her eager questions.

"Well my dear, she is no better. That is very certain."

"That is no answer. Doctor, is she—is she—going to die?"

The awful word was whispered hoarsely, and the girl's slim figure swayed to and fro, as she laid her hands on the doctor's arms, and gazed into his eyes to read her answer there.

His heart, used as it was to scenes of sadness, was brimming with sympathy, and his voice very tender, as, taking one hand in his own, and placing it within his arm, he led her round the garden talking quietly.

"My dear, you know that life and death are matters in God's hand, do you not? Humanly speaking your mother, and my dear friend, is very, very ill; and, if rest is coming to her, even by the pathway of death, for her sake we must learn to give it a welcome. For, I fear it is only too certain, that she will never be better in this world."

"Then God is cruel! No, don't say anything! He is! I have feared so for sometime; and now I know it. Let me go," she continued fiercely, as he held firm possession of her arm.

"Not just yet, Zennie, my dear. Listen a moment. What is it makes you love your mother with such passionate intensity?"

"Love her? How could I help it? Isn't she everything to me? Just every-thing?"

"But why? Not simply because she is mother I

suppose, strong though that tie may be?"

"There isn't another in the whole wide world like her, not one. See how sweet and patient she always is, though suffering enough at times to drive ordinary people mad. And how hard everything has been for her! Oh doctor, you don't know all, indeed you do not."

"Nor do you, my dear. Some day I will tell you something of what she was, when a girl like you, very like too. Now, however, if you are tempted to blame the God she loves, and witnesses for so grandly, talk to her my dear, talk to her, you could not have a better, or more experienced teacher."

"That is only another reason why I should think it cruel of God to take her away from me. Just now, when I am beginning to understand a little and need her more than ever. Oh you don't, you cannot know how much." And, tearing herself away the poor child disappeared to battle alone with her sorrow; while Doctor Tremaine with aching heart went home, determining to be a true friend to her in the heavy days so rapidly drawing near.

The following morning brought a letter for Zenobia, which had been enclosed in one to the tutor from her old friend Zedekiah, who had, for more than a year, been engaged at some large engineering works at Plymouth, thanks in great measure, to the Doctor's good offices.

"Dear Miss Marsh," it ran "Please forgive my venturing on writing to you, but I think I have good reason for doing so. I was down on the breakwater here last night, and a young man very poorly clad, and looking wretchedly ill, but as though he had been used to better things began talking to me. Somehow, from the first he seemed to remind me of you. Anyhow as he appeared to be ill, and in need, I invited him to go home with me; he seemed very weak, and could hardly manage to walk even that distance; and I found he had recently passed through a severe illness, and was but just discharged from the Infirmary. His clothes I saw were sailor's togs. Somehow though meeting so queerly we took to each other, and, after supper began talking quite familiarly. When he found that I hailed from Dunheved I saw his hand shake, and he said, 'ah I used to know some people there, I wonder if they have left or not? Is there a schoolmaster in the old town now called Marsh?' You can imagine my surprise! and his was quite as great when he learnt what good reasons I had for remembering you all. To make a long story short, it turned out that he was no other than your brother; though he says perhaps you have no recollection of him, as you were quite little when he left home. He is still with me, and seems possessed by a very strong desire to see his mother, my late dear mistress, before starting for sea again. Do you think he might venture? If so please let me know as soon as possible."

Having read so far, Zenobia folded the letter; and, with a puzzled face, hastened to her mother's room. Dare she mention its exciting contents? What would

be the effect? Her brother Edward she remembered distinctly, now that he was mentioned again; though she had almost entirely forgotten his existence. How kind he used to be, in carrying her round the garden on his back; and mending her broken toys; the tall big boy, who disappeared so suddenly, and completely, when she was barely four years old.

Sitting down by the bed, where she could watch every varying expression of the almost angelic face

she so passionately loved, Zenobia said—

"You remember Zedekiah Peardon do you not mother dear? I have had a letter from him this morning."

"Indeed! What can the lad have to write to thee

about? Of course I remember him perfectly."

- "He is at Plymouth, you know, and getting on very well, I fancy, though he says little about himself. I always knew he would do all right, didn't you? But he writes me about someone he has met, and been able to show some kindness to."

"The lad always had a kind heart; but of what interest was the matter to you especially, my dear?"

"He thinks I know the person."

"Thee! Know the person? Why, child, how could that be? Seeing that thy acquaintances out of Dunheved might be counted on the fingers of one hand!"

Zenobia's heart was beating painfully. Dared she say more? What would be the result? The house was very quiet, for school had commenced, and Lyddy, absorbed in the kitchen, knowing she was at her post, would not be likely to disturb their tête-átête.

The girl scanned her mother's face anxiously; how much more would it be safe to say? Passing her

arm round the slight figure, pressing kiss after kiss on the thin forehead from which the soft, pretty hair was smoothed back, she whispered—

"Mother, darling, darling mother, I had a brother

once, had I not?"

Mrs. Marsh withdrew herself from the caressing arm, and, turning painfully, seized her daughter's two hands, panting.

"What dost thee mean? Speak—quick! What of Ned? My boy, my first-born. Thee hast heard from him? My child! my child! Oh say thee hast!"

"No, mother darling, not from him, but of him, I hope. Oh don't, don't get excited, please don't," she sobbed.

Sinking back on the pillow her mother whispered—
"Thank God, oh, thank God. My prayer is answered." And an ineffable peace stole over her quiet face. Weary, oh so weary she was, beyond the power of words to express, but, retaining Zenobia's hand, she pressed it lovingly, and, as a slow tear fell from beneath the closed eyelids, her lips formed the request.

"More dear, tell me more."

Gently and quietly, Zenobia repeated all she knew, and, when she concluded, Mrs. Marsh said eagerly—

"Write! Write now—at once. Oh God, how good, how good thou art, my prayer is answered, answered. I shall see my boy again."

As her daughter was quitting the room to obey,

she cried eagerly-

"No, no, don't go away; write here. Send him my love, my dear love, and say come soon, soon. Oh, my darling, I am so happy."

# CHAPTER V.

#### REUNION.

OUR heroine had developed, during the past five years, from a bonny, somewhat heedless, passionate child, into a graceful, beautiful maiden of seventeen; who, as she walked, two evenings later, with rapid steps, to meet the incoming coach, was the object of admiring comment from several quarters.

Here it comes, the tired, dusty horses putting on an extra spurt to make a dashing sweep up the narrow High Street. Their action being stimulated by a resounding note on the long melodious horn.

Yes, there he was; that must be him, tall and thin, just as Zedekiah said. Stepping quickly to the side of the youngest passenger, as he rapidly descended, Zenobia said—

"You are Ned, are you not?"

"I am Ned Marsh, yes. But you? Surely you can never be baby Zennie?"

"Not baby Zennie. No indeed!" She gave a little amused laugh at the thought, then continued "but Zennie nevertheless. Leave everything behind and come with me; they will see to the luggage."

"I have nothing to leave, having only brought this bag, that I can carry."

He still scanned the girl doubtfully; was it possible he had been absent long enough for such a transformation to have taken place?

At home, Lydia, who had during these late months discovered an altogether unsuspected store of patience, and gentleness, was doing her best to soothe the excitement of the frail sufferer, whose queries were numberless

"Thee art sure everything is ready for him, Lydia? His room, just as he left it?"

"Iss, my dear missus, 'iss fey. Don't I remember just where he kep everything? Don't 'ce werrit yerself, now, don't 'ee. There baint no sort of occasion whatsomever. Bide quiet and rest, if so be as you can."

"I am quite too happy to rest, Lydia. Is not God good? I keep saying so, over and over again to myself. He is so much, so *much* better to me, than my faithless fears deserved."

She was silent for a few moments, then began again—

"Isn't it nearly time they were in sight? I wish thee would look out. Where is Edward? I hope, oh I do hope he will meet our boy kindly and gently."

"How else should he meet him, I'd like to know? He's down in t' parlour, watching too, belike. Here they be! Now lie still there's a good soul. You'll frighten the lad first go off, if you look like that."

Catching sight of Lydia's anxious face at the window, the young man, who had walked rapidly at his sister's side, as one in a dream, suddenly left her with an exclamation, and bounding up the stairs was, in an instant, on his knees at the bedside, raining kisses on the small transparent hand he held, and sobbing convulsively in the veriest abandonment of grief. What a contrast this mother presented to her he had left in his heedless passion! She was then a beautiful woman in the golden prime of life, somewhat graver perhaps than nature had meant her to be, but strong and full of eager life. Now——!

"Oh, mother, mother, my mother, at last, at last!"
She laughed. A merry joyous peal, such as for

many years had not been heard to pass her lips. It was faint and low, but still, such a laugh as could be drawn only from a heart entirely, blissfully content.

Zenobia was startled. She had followed her brother hastily, fearing the result of his unexpected action, and here was the object of her solicitude sitting up in bed, with eyes shining like live coals, and positively laughing merrily!

Hastening to her side, the girl passed her arm round the thin shoulders, only just in time: for, the next moment, her mother, with a gasping sigh, sank slowly back in a deadly swoon.

"Oh, my God! What have I done? She is not

dead? Oh, say she is not dead?"

"No, no, Ned dear. Hush; go downstairs for a little while, will you? Lyddy and I will bring her round presently, I hope; the excitement has been too much."

The meeting of the father and son was a very silent one. How could it be otherwise? Each being painfully conscious of the parting, which, in its stormy intensity, had taken place thirteen years ago. All other feelings were dulled, for Edward Marsh the younger, in the overwhelming agony of the sudden knowledge that this re-union with his mother but preceded the final parting. Yet why he had been so long parted from her, was an added pang. His heart was torn with a strong man's agony of sorrow, mingled as it could but be by bitter remorse. For, if his father had been hasty and passionate, had not he been guilty of repeated follies, and shown himself altogether impatient of control?

Yes indeed; very plainly and remorsefully he could now read in his own former actions many things he had never seen in them before. What a store of unavailing regrets he had piled up for himself, which should rise against him as a hydra-headed monster in the years to come!

After the first greeting he sat down at the table, and, burying his face in his hands, yielded himself a prey to heavy thoughts; while his father resumed his monotonous tramp up and down the room, uncertain what to do or say. He wished to be kind, but was not at all sure that he knew how to set about it.

Presently Lydia tapped and entered, saying-

"You'll be wanting something to eat, Mr. Edward. There's things in the next room. Missy would have come down but she can't leave yet."

"Stop, Lyddy. Is mother better?"

"Not quite; but her's coming round. Do'ee come and eat something, now do'ee."

"Eat? How can a fellow eat when his heart's

broken?" was the impatient reply.

"Tut! heart-broken! Not you, fey! Hearts don't break so easy as all that comes to, or the Missus, poor dear, would 'a gone from us long enough since! Come away do. I can't stay another minute hardly."

"Remain with him, Lyddy. I will go upstairs

now."

As Mr. Marsh entered the sick room, his wife had just opened her eyes, and was saying feebly—
"Where is he? Where is my boy? He was here!

Don't tell me I have only been dreaming!"

"No, mother darling. No indeed. He is downstairs now. I will fetch him up again presently when he has had some refreshment."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, quite, quite sure, dear."

Though the Angel of Death was brooding ever nearer, and yet more near, over this household, yet they were happy hearts which rested beneath its roof that night.

Zenobia, who still retained possession of the cosy little nest she occupied when we first formed her acquaintance, sent up heart-felt prayers of gratitude, even though tears mingled with her praise; for, she wondered, how long would it be before the light of their home was extinguished for ever?

Mrs. Marsh, however, slept more peacefully than she had done for many weeks, her heart was absolutely at rest; this answered prayer had done more than minister to her immediate longings, it had also filled her with a complete trust, nothing now would be powerful to disturb, in the Father's love, even for His erring children; whatever in the future might betide she was firmly convinced that, for her dear ones, all would ultimately be well.

As for the stranger son, though wearied, and still weak from recent illness, he was the last who succumbed to the influence of slumber. On his heart, the shock of seeing, unprepared, how near the borderland his mother was, had sounded an awful knell; for, he asked himself, might it not be, that his own action had accelerated her early death? He knew with what intensity she had loved him; and now she lay dying, there was no disguising that fact. Her days—nay, it might even be, her hours were surely numbered. Though he longed to accuse God of cruelty, how dare he? Had not his own actions been criminally, fatally thoughtless? Nay, more, hard-hearted. He saw it all now.

However, the following morning there was so marked an improvement in the sufferer's condition, that her friends were almost tempted to hope a miracle might be worked by happiness, and that she would recover. Animated by this hope, some of Zenobia's natural buoyancy returned, and her lively sallies amused, while they somewhat astonished her father and brother at the early meal.

"Ned," she cried, "teach me your secret, will you? I don't think it is at all fair that you should possess the power of renewing life when it has almost gone, and keep the knowledge to yourself. I am a genuine Cornish girl in my eagerness to know. So let me share the benefit of your wisdom."

"I only wish I did possess it," he replied, as the

door opened, and Lydia said-

"Your mother is just pining for a sight of 'ee, Mr. Edward. Come up to her so soon as ever you've finished breakfast, now do'ee."

"I'll come at once, Lyddy."

As he left the room, Zenobia remarked-

"I cannot make Ned out at all, father; he is not in the very least like I had pictured him. So thin and grave a man I should not have imagined could possibly be evolved from my merry noisy brother."

"He is improved, very much improved; roughing it a little has toned him down, I expect. There goes that bell! Well, I suppose I must be off. If your mother asks for me at all, do not forget to send in."

"Of course I will not, father."

Zenobia watched him as he walked away, and murmured—

"Why cannot he always be just as kind and gentle? How I would love him if he were. Poor father. I declare there comes Doctor Tremaine; I am so glad. Won't he be pleased to hear of the improvement in dear mother?" and she ran lightly down the garden path to meet him.

"Hello! Why you look as fresh as a May morning! Somebody has something to be glad about, that is very plain! Eh? Isn't that so?"

"Indeed it is, doctor. I almost dare hope that mother is going to get better after all. The change

since Ned came is wonderful."

"So Ned is the necromancer, is he? Well, what is he like? and where is he now? I must have a word

with this young man myself."

"He is tall, and thin, and quiet. Can you imagine it? As to where he is—with mother, be sure. She just seems to get a stronger hold on life every hour that he spends with her. It is worth any price to see the improvement."

"'Um; there mustn't be too much of it though. There is such a thing as burning the candle at both ends, remember. Dangerous policy at any time, worst

of all here."

"Come up and see for yourself, and please, please, don't croak. We are all so happy."

" All?"

"Yes, all. Everyone, without any exception."

"Come, that is good. On the strength of it, put that lovely rosebud into my buttonhole. There must be something to mark this day as a red-letter one. And the Belle of the Parish does not often favour me with her attentions. She flies at higher game than a middle aged father of a family, eh?"

Zenobia laughed as she obeyed.

"You are getting quite sentimental, doctor, I declare, I wonder at you. There, that looks very nice. Now come along. Has Violet come home yet?"

"Not she, the young puss. Violet knows when she has secured cosy quarters, and is in no hurry to leave them. I intend taking her ladyship by storm, and

fetching her back next week, though. Lily has had a solitary tussle with those young turks quite long enough."

Violet and Lily Tremaine shared between them the responsibility of training, or trying to train, the nursery party; a post, in this household at least, which the elder sisters found to be no sinecure; their mother being usually pretty fully occupied in caring for the needs of her latest baby. During the last month or more, Violet had been experiencing the pleasures of a visit to a school friend, in whose home, no young brothers or sisters were present, to share the love lavished in no stinted measure on her own favoured self; and the guest was in no hurry to reassume her elder sisterly authority.

"Oh Doctor," exclaimed Mrs. Marsh, as he entered, "I am so glad to see thee. If it had not been for thy goodness this happiness would not have been mine."

"Indeed? How so, I wonder? I never refuse to accept gratitude if I can help it, bad policy, you know; but in this case, how I can possibly deserve it is beyond me. Shake hands, Ned, my boy. I am heartily glad to say, 'Welcome home.'"

"Because if thee had not been willing to help that poor lad, Zedekiah Peardon, my boy would have got no news of us."

"Come, Mrs. Marsh! That is rather a round about way of seeking a subject for gratitude, don't you think so? But by whatever means this reunion has been brought about, I am delighted at the result. Oh, you young folk, how little you realize what harm you may do by so hastily taking the law into your own hands! I musn't preach, though, must I, Mrs. Marsh? Tell me some of your adventures, my lad. I should say, come

downstairs before you begin, but that proposal would not be acceptable, would it?"

"No, no, Doctor; no indeed. I have hardly heard anything yet; please don't take him away."

"Then promise me to lie quite still, and let us do the talking."

During the foregoing conversation he had been narrowly watching her eager face, and, to his experienced eyes, the apparent improvement seemed very far indeed from becoming a permanent one. Scating himself where he could watch every expression which flitted across her countenance, though not too obtrusively, he continued—

"Here, Zenobia, you want to hear, of course. I never yet knew a woman who was not curious, whether she be young or old; sit here, will you? Then you can give your mother a little of this cordial, should she require it."

"Now Doctor, I am not in the least curious as a rule; I could give you lots of instances, but in this case the feeling is quite legitimate—you cannot deny that."

Pressing her son's hand, Mrs. Marsh signed to him that he should begin.

It appeared that when, all those years before, he had run away, after suffering a severer flogging even than usual, at his father's hands, vowing, in his angry young heart, never more to cross the home threshold of his own free will, an act of which he now repented bitterly, he had, after some difficulty, succeeded in making his way to the coast. At first he thought of going to Bude, that being the nearest seaport, but remembered that vessels of any size did not put in there; also that in so small a place, where he had often been before, somebody would probably recognize him. So he finally decided on turning his steps towards Boscastle, hoping

to find a berth on board one of the Norwegian timber vessels which frequented this port.

Even after reaching the town he hung about for several days, uncertain in what manner to prefer his request, until, overhearing a conversation between two weather-beaten salts, who appeared to be in quest of a boy, he summoned courage, and within a couple of hours was on the open sea, bound for Christiana. On the whole he did not experience a bad time of it at the hands of the good-natured Norwegians.

"Why did thee never write, my son? Thee little

realized how the hearts at home were aching."

"I often longed to, mother. Many a sheet of paper have I spoiled in commencing letters, and then tearing them up. I had determined, you see, that nothing should persuade me to return, and besides, I argued, father would not care to hear, and it was better that you should forget."

"Thee little knew. Thee little knew. Forget? How

could I? My son, it was cruel, it was indeed!"

"So I think now, mother. But I was thoughtless then, and time passed very quickly with constant changes. Well, years went on, I stayed three on board one vessel, but then bad companions and drink got me into a scrape, which led to my dismissal.

"After that things did not go smoothly at all. Sometimes I would succeed in getting a short engagement, then, for months I did nothing but loaf around, and might have been doing the same to-day, but for an accident on board my last ship, which laid me low, and shut me up in the hospital as soon as we reached port."

"What was the accident?"

"A slip among the rigging, mother. I fell crash on to my head, and was stunned and senseless for long enough. When I came to myself, I was in a large airy room, with beds on either side, and a sweet, gentle-looking woman was moving about, putting a pillow straight here, giving a drink there, now and then stopping for a moment or two's chat. She was passing me by with only a glance, but, meeting my eyes exclaimed, while holding a glass to my lips—

'Then you are better? Come this is cheering. Doctor Hilton will be pleased, when he looks in

presently."

"Hilton!" exclaimed Doctor Tremaine; "my old college chum, I declare! I wonder he didn't find out where you hailed from, and send me word."

"I never gave him a chance. Though rapidly mending, things looked so desperate for me that I was morose as man could be; scarcely opening my lips, and, when my discharge came, hardly had the grace to say 'thank-you' to my kind nurse; for kind she was, in more ways than one."

"What prevented thy coming home direct then, or at least writing?"

"Two things. Want of will, and want of funds. In the first place, I had persuaded myself long before that you all thought of me as dead; and would not be particularly grateful to hear of a resurrected unfortunate, who had made a mull of his life. I know better now, you see."

"My poor, unhappy boy."

"Unhappy indeed, mother. I was that. Well, as to funds, on enquiry I found them to be 'nil' absolutely. Whether I had been robbed or not, nobody knew. However it was no money appeared to be forthcoming among my few belongings. By disposing of my more decent clothes I managed to raise enough cash to keep me going for a time, but it soon dwindled, and

when, one night, I wandered out and accosted a young fellow on the beach, the was scarcely a more desperate man in Plymouth than I. I can never forget his kindness. You cannot realize what it meant to a sick and homeless fellow, when, without any hesitation, after one good look at me,—a keen look it was too—he said—

"Come to my room; it's not far away, and though not very big, will hold us both, I reckon,"

"You know what followed. How he found me out, and wrote home, without telling me what he intended doing. If he had, I might even then have refused my consent. But he went further, these very clothes I am wearing are nearly all his, and my fare he provided. Yet it was all done with such heartiness that I do not feel in the least ashamed of having accepted it."

Zenobia's face was beaming, and her eyes dancing, as, kissing her mother's hand, she cried—

"Just like old Zed! He is grand, I always knew he would be! Yet I don't believe it would be easy for anyone to take him in either! So you can't have been such a very bad fellow, Ned."

"Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days!" murmured the invalid, with streaming eyes.



## CHAPTER VI.

## FADED.

CLINGING lovingly to her brother's arm, as the two stood watching, from the topmost ring of the Castle walks, the sun setting in golden glory behind distant hills, Zenobia was quietly happy. As a rule she was given to volubility, but Edward seemed, during these days of companionship, to have infected her with some of his own reticence, so unlike what she remembered of the lad who was perpetually in scrapes from his love of mischief.

The evening was perfect. During the early hours rain had fallen, but now, a cloudless sky, in which a few pale stars were gradually becoming visible, drew her thoughts away from earth, and earth's sorrows, to its own perfect, though mysterious beauty; absorbing by degrees her attention so utterly that she became almost totally oblivious to her present surroundings.

It was very silent, not a creature appeared to be near them; only a few birds twittered drowsily in the tall trees whose topmost branches were below the height on which they stood. A party of boys finishing a game of cricket in the green below were discussing excitedly some vexed question, their voices mellowed by distance. One by one the street lamps were being lit, and very soon now, if they did not descend, the Castle gates would be locked.

Suddenly Edward's voice recalled her wandering thoughts.

"I cannot see the reason of it," he was saying musingly. "The more I think of it the more puzzling it becomes. Why does it so often happen that the purest natures have the hardest lot to bear? Mother

is not the only instance of this fact whom I have come across. There was a mate on board my second vessel-Bless my soul, what a perfect hell that man's life was! The captain seemed to hate him worse than poison, and was everlastingly seeking some way of annoying him. Yet he bore all this abuse so gently, and responded in such a prompt manner to the slightest command, that I, as well as the other fellows, thought at first he was just a cowardly milksop. Was he though? One day the cry rang out 'Man overboard!' Just a fool of a blundering Irishman it was, who possessed a perfect genius for getting himself into trouble of some sort, but that was no matter; over like a flash, just waiting to kick his shoes off, went that grand fellow, and held his struggling captive's head above water-for the man couldn't swim, of course, and behaved like the veriest lunatic-until the boat could be lowered. I can tell you it was touch and go for both of them; the mate especially. He never said much, but from the little I did gather I feel convinced his secret was the same as mother's."

"There's Zedekiah too," was Zenobia's rejoinder. "How he bore that last year at school I'm sure I can't imagine. It seemed as though the mere sight of him irritated father beyond power of control; why, I am still as much puzzled as ever to conjecture; but, for some reason, hardly a day passed without his getting punished for something. Yet he was always doing little kindnesses. Injustice did not appear to sour him in the least. The younger ones missed him I can tell you, when he left, and so did I."

"He's one of the finest fellows I ever came across," exclaimed Ned with enthusiasm. "The way he trusted my bare word was splendid, for you cannot imagine what a disreputable beggar I looked. How I came

to accost him in the first place is a mystery to me even yet. It must have been something in his face, and I was feeling utterly hopeless. But, as I told you, after the first look at me he just said at once, 'Come home with me, will you? My room is not much to boast of, but you are heartily welcome to share it to-night.' I should think its not much to boast of! Such a box of a place, little better than a good-sized cupboard."

"Zed won't mind that much, I fancy, if he has his

books."

"Books! The place is full of them, ragged pamphlets, and folios of all sorts and sizes, lie about everywhere. That first night he never went to bed at all, I believe, but spent it in study; not the wisest thing in the world to do after all, for he has to work pretty hard during the day."

They were slowly descending the long flight of steps as they talked, but, before the outer gate was reached, night had overtaken them.

It was locked, and a sharp reprimand for their dilatoriness awaited them from the old gate-keeper.

"Whatever do folks want mooning about that gait?" he muttered. "Lovemaking, belike; drat the fools, will menfolk niver larn sense?"

But, as a child's cry floated towards them, through the open door of his cottage, it appeared more likely than not, that, at some time he had been guilty of committing a similar folly to that with which they were credited, so was precluded from throwing stones!

Mrs. Marsh had continued so much brighter since her son's return, that, at her request, the brother and sister had not scrupled to leave her for this evening's ramble. Before they returned, however, she asked Lydia, who was sitting in the room knitting busily as usual, to request her husband to join her, if he were in the house.

Her voice sounded weaker than it had done of late, and, looking closely at her, the woman's heart sank. There was such a subtle change in the expression of her features, as, an experienced eye knew, boded the end for her of all earthly hopes. She was going; and that soon.

Hurrying away to fulfil her wish, Lydia discovered the object of her search, engaged at what, long years ago, was his favourite recreation—a small carpenter's bench.

He glanced up as her figure obtruded itself between him and the little light which remained, saying—

"Stand back, Lydia. Stand back a moment: what is it you want?"

"It's the Mistress, I don't want 'ee; bless 'ee, no. She do though. Go up this minute, will 'ee please? An' for goodness' sake, be so kind as ever you know how."

"Kind? Of course I'll be kind! Why, what ails the woman?"

Dropping the plane he held, Mr. Marsh walked away, somewhat annoyed; while Lydia, proceeding to the kitchen, and carefully shutting both doors, threw herself into a low chair, and, burying her head in her muslin apron, wept unrestrainedly, sobbing hysterically as she ejaculated—

"I might ha' known. Oh, Lord! I might ha' known. That there death-watch were'nt ticking away half the night for nothing, drat the thing. And that were a coffin, oh dear it were, though I made believe as how it were'nt, that flew out o' my candle yesternight. Oh me, oh me! just when us thought a bit o' peace were coming too. Oh dear, oh dear. My

Missus, my blessed Missus, as never did anybody a hand-stroke o' harm. Whatever will us all do wanting her?"

While the old servant was indulging her grief below stairs, her master had hastily sought his wife's

room, saying-

"Well, Anice, you wanted me, I gather from Lydia. She has a strange way of delivering messages sometimes, I must say."

"Yes, I wanted to have a talk with thee while the children are away. Come close, closer, Edward, please."

Something in her voice struck even him, and he turned quickly to obtain a light before replying.

"Nay, dear, do not light the candle just yet. I like to watch the sky. See, the stars are coming out one by one. Sit here at my side. Edward, dear, the end is very near now."

"No, no, Anice; you have thought so before, and proved wrong. See how much better you have been the last few days! Perhaps you are a little over tired, but that is all."

"Yes, I know. Much better. So much joy at the close has compensated for a great deal. But I knew it could not last. Now, I do not think, I know, beyond the possibility of mistake, that I am going home—Home."

She paused for a moment, then continued-

"I sent for thee because I want thy solemn promise to comply with a somewhat strange request."

"Anice, my dear wife-"

"Nay, please Edward, my husband, do not interrupt; I have much to say, and strength is waning rapidly."

"I will promise anything, Anice; anything. Only let me send up for Tremaine."

"No, no; it would be of no use, and I must be alone with thee for a while. Thank thee for that assurance; do not let anything or anyone prevent thy keeping this one promise, please. When I am gone, will you yourself close my eyes, and lay me straight without a change of gown? I have a very special reason for asking it, and no one, no one but you must touch me."

He tried, in the fading light, to read the expression of her face; surely her mind must be wandering.

"Edward, you confirm your promise? Say you do?" How eagerly she questioned him, as though the subject were of vital importance.

"My dear, how can I comply with so strange, so very strange a request? What possible reason can you have for making it?"

"A good one. Oh, such a good and all-sufficient one."

"Can you not tell it me?"

"No, no. Do not ask me; only promise."

"My darling, if I saw the smallest chance of keeping it I would, believe me. But you yourself know what difficulties are sure to be raised."

"Edward, it *must* be done; for thy sake and the children's it must be. I cannot ask our little girl, my precious daughter; the memory of an inevitable discovery would be far too painful for her to carry through life."

"What can your motive be?"

"Must I tell? Lean thy head on the pillow by me then, and let me whisper it."

He did as she requested, but in a few moments

started up, as though suddenly seized with intensest

agony, exclaiming wildly—
"My God! Can this be? It is impossible, quite impossible. Oh, Anice, Anice, say it is not true. If it is, God help me, or I shall, I must, go mad!"

He was kneeling by the bed now, and his bitter imploring accents thrilled her heart.

"I would have died with my secret untold, if thee would'st only have let me, dear. But the knowledge must not spoil thy future. I forgave all freely long since."

A deep groan was the only reply, so she continued—"Nothing is permitted which has no good possibility behind it; try to realise that truth fully, Edward. If my long years of suffering win for thee freedom from thy besetting sin, God knows how little I regret them."

"But—but—if it is true—how have you contrived to hoodwink Tremaine?"

"He thinks my suffering proceeds from another cause entirely. Thee knows I have steadily refused to undergo an examination. My weak heart has been blamed for much more than lay at its door. Thy promise dear-thee hast not given it yet. For thy own and the children's sake, thou wilt do as I ask? Say thou wilt?"

"I must! I must, but-oh God, it is awful. Too terrible for contemplation. And you have known this all along, and made no sign? How could you bear it? I shall go to my grave branded as Cain was. I! I!"

"Oh, hush. Hush, Edward, my dear husband. I have felt no bitterness because of it for many years. Thee wert not so much to blame."

"What! Anice! Don't you use, even to exonerate

me, that coward's plea—The drink did it. What right had I, a man who prided myself on my strength of will, to let *any* passion become my master? That fact only makes the sin more hideous; do you think I cannot see that?"

"And yet, my own dear husband, if thou still relies on that same strong will, instead of bending it in willing subjection to a stronger power, I fear, I sadly fear, that notwithstanding this knowledge the evil may master thee again."

"There come the children. I cannot meet them, I cannot. God help me, how shall I bear it?"

Zenobia, entering presently, found her mother alone, and in darkness. Fancying she detected a smothered sob, as the door opened, she paused irresolute. Yes, she was in tears; the dear, bright mother!

Hastily lighting a candle, she hurried to the bed, and stooped to kiss its occupant. As she did so, shaking hands were raised and clasped convulsively round her neck, straining her close, close, in a passionate embrace.

"My own little girl! My good, true daughter, my best comfort! Help them, comfort them. God's blessing is sure to rest on thee then, my precious darling."

"Mother! Dear, darling mother! What is the matter? You are not worse? Oh, say you are not worse!"

"Nearly better, on the contrary, my darling. All pain has well-nigh passed away."

What could she mean? The trembling, terrified girl tried to raise herself, that she might see her mother's face. But the latter only pressed her yet more closely to her own heaving breast.

"Why, what are you doing, you two?"

It was her son's voice, and, releasing Zenobia, Mrs. Marsh held out one trembling arm towards him, but words would not come. Again and again she tried to speak, but in vain. A few moments later, only a very few, and every one in the house knew that the gentle spirit was winging its flight.

For a time she lay with closed eyes, utterly exhausted; then, by a supreme effort of will,

whispered—

"Leave us, Edward, a little while."

Listening until he had gone, she continued-

"Now, my dear, thee take out the night-dress on the top—in that right hand drawer. Help me—to put—it—on."

"But, mother darling, it should be aired."

"That is all right. Do—not—fear. Quick—be quick."

By slow and painful degrees the garment she wore was slipped down—she always refused to have it drawn over her head—and the new one substituted; it was quite new, and oh, so dainty; with her own fine needlework.

When all was completed, she nodded, with an appealing glance, towards the door; and Lydia—who had regained a measure of self-control—appearing at this moment, was immediately sent in search of her husband and son.

So, she lay there, surrounded by her dear ones, quite conscious, though speechless, her great eyes testifying eloquently to the undying love which animated her fast departing spirit, as they rested, first on one, and then another, grief stricken countenance.

Mr. Marsh sat almost as motionless as an automaton; a grey shadow on his usually florid countenance making a startling change. The son and daughter

held possession of either hand; they were fast growing cold. So the hours wore away. Now and then Zenobia would gently moisten her lips, dry and parched from the effort of breathing. At length in the early dawn, with a satisfied sigh, the last breath was drawn, and they knew themselves to be motherless.

Bending reverently over the placid face, while great tears rained from his eyes, Ned kissed the cold brow and lips. Then, taking his almost unconscious sister in his arms, left the room.

Lydia, turning to her master, her voice choked by sobs said-

"Do 'ee try to get a bit o' rest, now do 'ee!"
"Is it over then? Over?" he asked slowly. "Very well, leave me."

"Nay, Master, I've summat to do here. You go, now do 'ee; and rest a bit, if so be as you can."
"Rest? Rest? No rest for me. Leave me with

my dead. Leave me, I say."

"But I can't. I—"

"Go. Go! You must not touch her. No one, no one must. I promised. Go, or I shall really become a madman. My God, this is awful. GO!"

Frightened and wondering, she at length obeyed, and, when the door closed on her retreating form, the key was immediately turned in the lock.

"What ails the master? What can ail him?" she muttered. "He's gone clean daft, for sure. Oh me, my nurse chield, my heart's treasure. It's little pleasure, and much sorrow your life brought you, with all your beauty and sweetness. What'll your gentle quaker mother have to say to ye, when ye tell her all, I wonder? Ay, life's a sad and sorry thing at best, 'tis that."

As soon as he and his dead were alone, Mr. Marsh acted very strangely. Closing his wife's fast glazing eyes, and kissing the smiling lips, he slowly unbuttoned with clumsy, unaccustomed fingers, the soft white nightdress which covered the cold clay. Then, taking the candle nearer, that its light might fall as he wished, slowly slipped it down on one side, until what he so fearfully sought was revealed. Yes, there it was, the secret cause of all those years of agony—and what agony she had endured, who could realize?—and now, of her untimely death.

An awful witness to his own brutality, a dark diseased mass, contrasting fearfully with the pure, untarnished whiteness of the surrounding flesh.

Heaving one heart-broken groan, he replaced the garment, gently crossed her hands on the still breast, and, falling on his knees, remained for hours entirely unconscious of any attempt which might be made from the outside to summon him hence.

Who can say by what horrors he was assailed during that time of secluded and awful silence, with his dead. Bitter and unavailing regret tugged at his heart-strings, for, even though he had frequently been sharp and unkind, morose and surly, yet, to have inflicted a physical injury on the woman whom, whatever his faults might have been, he genuinely and sincerely loved, was an act abhorrent to his whole nature. He recalled with ghastly vividness, when it had occurred, and what had provoked him. He had excused himself then, declaring that no one, not even his mother, had a right to come between himself and their rebellious young son; and when, finding words of no avail, she had attempted to interpose her own form between himself and her child, he had flung her roughly from him. That was

years ago, and she, the gentle weak woman, had, for his sake, kept silence!

How she must have loved him! What persistence, what marvellous endurance had enabled her to bear the slow torture, ever growing keener, and more keen, yet make no sign?

Yes, at all costs, he must still preserve the secret she had guarded so jealously.

And he did. From that night, until the still form was laid in its final resting place, the sorrowing husband scarcely left the dear remains by day or night, and would not allow a hand to touch her but his own. Oh how gentle he was, now that it was too late!

In vain Zenobia pleaded, and had tried to urge the necessity of his attention to various questions. He only replied—

"Manage everything as you will. Ask Tremaine's advice, but leave me to myself. It is all I ask."

Downstairs there might be whisperings and all manner of strange conjectures propounded. But he did not hear; and if he had, would certainly have given no heed to anything they might say. All his determination being concentrated on yielding to her latest request a literal obedience.



## CHAPTER VII.

"A BURDEN too heavy for girlhood to bear."

"VIOLET, do not try to persuade me, it is impossible, utterly; and I cannot stand the worry of explaining everything; even if I could make you understand."

Zenobia spoke impatiently. Poor girl, nerves and strength had been strained to the utmost, during the past trying weeks; and it had become apparent to her friends, if not to herself, that, unless a change of scene could be by some means arranged for, a complete collapse was imminent. But, to all attempt at persuasion on the subject, she persisted in giving the same reply.

"It could not be."

Why?

The reason unfortunately is not far to seek. While Violet Tremaine, whose fondness for our Zenobia has increased in strength as the years have passed—is trying what force lies concealed in her own powers of persuasion; in another room, not far from the two girls, Mr. Marsh is sitting in gloomy solitude, a picture of hopeless despair. As the days pass, his pupils are, some of them, almost tempted to wish that the old conditions might return. It is true they are very seldom caned now, and even a loud reproof rarely startles the busy silence. Yet, somehow, the school has never been so silent, nor the feeling of oppression, and dread, so rife at any former date; than at the close of this summer term.

Nathan, the baby boarder of old, is now head of the first class, and often informs his "chum," of his rooted intention not to return again after the recess, if he is able to persuade his father that he really can learn no more by staying on in his present quarters.

As soon as the pupils are dismissed, the Master daily proceeds to the same room, and shuts himself in, sometimes even refusing to leave it at meal times. This afternoon, he is in an even more depressed condition than has become chronic with him, and, on the table near, as he sits with his head bent forward, stands a bottle containing a supply of the same potent spirit which, of late years, has been powerful to change him, from an eager, earnest, warmhearted friend, husband and father, into an object of fear, or at least, dislike, rather than respect and affection. Yet, who would not pity him? Try as he will, he cannot forget the awful revelation which had almost broken his heart; even while leaving him weak enough—with all his boasted strength of will!—to seek relief in frequent draughts of this, his worst foe.

Zenobia is only too well aware of what is taking place, and dare not leave her post. Has she not promised the so lately departed mother to be true to her trust? Yet, how could she, even to the nearest and most discreet friend, tell her real reason for refusing to leave home?

"But, Zennie dear," continued Violet pleadingly; "You will break down utterly if you persist in acting like this. That would be far more serious than just going away for a few weeks. Bude is near enough for you to hear from home pretty frequently, and return at a day's notice if there is need at any time. Though I really do not see what necessity could arise. Won't Mr. Marsh be able to come as well?"

"There is no reason why he should not, but I don't think anything would persuade him to do so,

and I cannot leave him. Don't say any more, Vi, please dear."

Lydia had been fidgetting in and out of the room for the last few moments, and now remarked—

"Miss Violet, I be glad to find that you'm trying to make this here chiel listen to sense. Her's actin' for all the world like a mazed crittur; her is that. Don't 'ee give over werritting till her promises to go with 'ee, now don't 'ee."

"Oh, Lyddy, how can you be so unkind. When you know so well, why I cannot go! It is quite cruel of you."

"Yes you can go. There's neither rhyme nor raison in the way you'm acting. What's the best of two things I wonder? Jest going to the say for a matter of a couple o' weeks, or having a right down bad sick bout? An' its one or the other you'll have to make up your mind to, take my word for't."

"Well. I must think about it, that's all. I'm just longing for the smell of the sea, there is no use in denying that."

"Then you shall have it;" decided Violet. "If you won't come in any other way we must e'en take you by force! Just back me up Lyddy, will you? Get her things ready, and pack them, she will and must go. That's decided."

"Ay, I'll do my level best; trust me," replied Lydia, nodding her head emphatically as she left the room.

"Zennie, have you heard from your brother yet?"

"Yes, I had a letter this morning. He wrote directly he went on board. They were to sail an hour after he sent word; so it is only a scrawl, but I was glad to get it. He has promised to write whenever an

opportunity offers. Oh, dear, I wish he could have stayed at home."

"I do hope they will have a good voyage. What a fortunate thing it was, that Captain Good had that vacancy was'nt it?"

"Yes, indeed, though I was very sorry to say goodbye, so soon after finding my brother, you don't know how lonely I feel sometimes. But it is very evident that father and Ned will always be better friends at a distance."

"I don't think their failure to appreciate each other will make much difference really; as he seems so determined to continue a sailor's life. His hardships are over I hope, that is something to be very thankful for, and father says there is the making of a grand man in him; I heard him telling mother so."

"I hope so. Dear old Ned. Perhaps father and he will learn to understand each other better as time passes."

Zenobia spoke absently, and, as she lay back on the lounge, the pose of her slight figure was expressive of extreme weariness. After a moment's silence she said—

"When do you go?"

"Mother, baby, and Lil are off to-morrow morning. We shall follow on Thursday, the whole tribe. Don't you pity me, with all those restless creatures in charge?"

"Shall you travel by coach? I thought the doctor would have driven you over?"

"So he meant to. But three of his patients are dangerously ill; and two of the cases it seems need constant watching; so the onerous duty devolves on poor me."

"Ted is going as well, isn't he? Won't he help?"

"Ted! Help! Much you know my lively brother!

Where is your memory? He only adds to the pandemonium, of that you may be quite sure. But, it is time I was off. You will not disappoint us all; will you dear? I have not had a single opportunity of unburdening myself, since coming home; and you have no idea how much there is bottled up inside my small self. I can assure your ladyship I stand in sore need of the assistance your methodical mind can render, in arranging, and classifying my memory stores. They are simply chaotic just now. Why there's father I declare! Good gracious! It must be past six o'clock. He could not possibly have returned before. What a weeping and wailing there will be at home! Alas, for poor me!"

Mr. Tremaine paused at the open door, on being confronted by his young daughter's petite figure; then, pretending to entirely overlook her presence, though pointedly barring her exit, he exclaimed—

"Zenobia, my child, I should like to have a word in private with you. May I come in? You are alone I presume?"

A faint smile crossed Zenobia's face as she shook her head, and pointed in the direction of her friend.

Hurrically raising his eyeglasses the doctor peered about the room, then exclaimed—

"Why bless my soul, I beg your pardon I am sure. You have a young lady visitor! Remarkably like my daughter," he continued in a loud aside. "It cannot be her though, no, of course not, she is busy at this time of day. Very busy."

"You horrid Papa! The idea of pretending to ignore me like that! Of course it's me, my own self."

"Then your own self ought to be somewhere else,

young lady; don't you know that?"

"To be sure I do, and was just running off, but it has been such hard work persuading Zennie to go with us that I quite forgot how the time was passing."

"You need have taken no trouble at all in the matter. I would have arranged and satisfactorily settled the whole question in a quarter of an hour, or less. Duty to herself, and those she loves says 'Go.' That will be assurance enough for my Queen Zenobia, or I am greatly mistaken in her. Come away with me now, if you have been performing, in a clumsy manner, the errand I intended polishing off so neatly. You are naughty to be playing truant, and shirking your duty in this manner."

"Put on your hat and come with us, Zennie, do, it will be a real kindness to guard me from this tyrant's tongue," said the girl saucily.

But Zenobia shook her head dissentingly, and the

"tyrant" replied for her.

"No, no, let her alone; the thoughts we have given her to cogitate upon, will need time to simmer." And, with a kind, bright, "good-day" he hurried away, dragging Violet with him. Lydia, who was spreading some linen on the grass to bleach, looked up as they passed, and said—

"I be glad to find somebody sees how sickly an' whist you dear chield be getting to look, her wants

a change badly, doctor, her do that."

"Yes, and I don't think it will really prove a difficult task persuading her to come away. You will do your best Lydia, I'm quite sure."

"No fear!"

Zenobia lay back with closed eyes as the figures of

her friends disappeared from sight. What ailed her she could not tell, but exertion of any kind, had become an unendurable burden; a torture to contemplate; it could not be many weeks, though it certainly appeared years, since her energy had been boundless; now, the only boon she craved was to be let alone. Even reading was impossible, she seemed to have entirely lost the power of concentration.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Marsh."

It was Mr. Simmonds who spoke. He had entered the room unnoticed, and stood for some moments uncertain how to act, comtemplating, with pity expressed on every feature, the silent figure before him.

Opening her eyes, she sat up saying-

"Do you want me, Mr. Simmonds? What is it?"

"I only thought—it appears to me that Mr. Marsh is acting dangerously."

"Why what is he doing?"

"He has been so strange, and distrait, since Mr. Edward went away, as you have I think noticed for yourself; and — pardon me, if I seem to interfere—should not be left so much alone. I would not have troubled you, believe me, if my own companionship had been acceptable to him."

"But indeed I do not know how to prevent it. He shirks my society quite as much as he does that of others. Do you know where he is now?"

"In his own little room, I think."

Thanking him gently for the interest he showed, Zenobia walked away, but turned again as she neared the door, to say—

"I fear far more than a fair share of work has devolved upon you of late, Mr. Simmonds, and should like to thank you for the considerate patience you have

shown. The recess will be doubly welcome this term, I am sure."

Poor man; he was entirely overwhelmed! Had not a passionate admiration for this sadfaced, beautiful girl, taken deep root in his heart? And was not the possibility of rendering, in however distant a manner, service to her, reward sufficient for all his exertions?

Something of this he longed to say, but only succeeded in blurting out

"It has been a pleasure, a great pleasure, I am sure. I—"

But she was gone, and he could only anathematize his unready tongue. What an opportunity he had let slip! However, she acknowledged that he really had been of use, and was grateful; that was something. On the strength of this aeriel foundation, he proceeded straight-way, while pretending to be immersed in an abstruse scientific volume, to erect an impossible, but delightful "Castle in Spain," the mere imagination of which, peopled as he would have it, transformed his homely person, into a veritable hero of romance! Well, the amusement pleased him, and did no one else one atom of harm. As to the object of his desire, she was calmly and supremely unconscious of his feelings, believing, if she ever thought of what the future might bring at all, that the knight who should succeed in taking the stronghold of her heart, had never yet approached even the outworks.

As Zenobia gently opened the door of her father's room, his weary, bloodshot eyes, raised to her face, sent a pang to her heart. If love to her mother, had caused his sorrow at her loss to take this form, how strong it must have been; even though frequently exhibited so strangely. Walking towards him she said kindly—

"Come into the garden, father, will you? There is a pleasant breeze now, though it is close within doors."

"Eh? Why can't you let me alone? Out of doors indeed, because it's pleasant forsooth; no not I. I What right have I to enjoy anything? Go away." "I don't like leaving you alone so much, father. It

"I don't like leaving you alone so much, father. It seems unkind. See, I may put this away now—may I not? Then you will come for a few moments, just to please me?"

He watched her movements jealously, as, removing the bottle from the table, she proceeded to lock it in

the sideboard, placing the key in her own pocket.

It required a strong curb on his passion to withhold himself from snatching it forcibly out of her hand. But all attempts to lure him from the house were in vain; and, finding that even her presence irritated him almost beyond endurance; Zenobia, after a while, left the unhappy man again to himself.

As soon as the door closed on her retreating form, his head sank forward on the table, and he groaned aloud—

"Oh, Anice, Anice, why did you tell me? Why? I cannot forget, for a single moment; and the knowledge will curse me. Curse me, everlastingly!"

"Missic I want 'ee, just for a minute. Look 'ee here, it's no manner o' use your thinking to wear them there black gowns all the time as you're over to Bude. Just go up to Miss Congdon's now do 'ee, and get measured for another white one. I'll manage somehow to make the old one you had last summer fit for wearing mornings."

"But I have not said I will go yet, Lyddy. Though it seems little use my staying at home, that is certain. Oh, Lyddy, it gets harder every day

without mother. How can I go 'on for years like this?"

"I be that sorry for 'ee, my dear chiel, iss fay, that I be. That's why I do so want 'ee to go with your friends."

"But father? How can I leave him? He is bad enough now; but if I go away what may not happen?"

"Look 'ee here now; my dear chiel." Lydia sat down, smoothing her apron as she always did, when preparing to lay down the law very emphatically. "Seemeth to me, you must be forgetting some of the things that there blessed mother o' yours was always telling us, and acting as if she believed in herself. An one o' the very first was 'trust.' Her had trust in God, in a way I'm free to confess I never had; nor could have I'm feared. I don't believe it's in me. And her had trust in us too. Now my dearie, just you take a leaf out of her book, her's done with it now, bless her dear heart, and knows for sure all about everything. Trust me, will 'ee? I promise, solemn, if you'll only leave this trouble behind, to do my level best for your father. There's the doctor too, he'll look in whiles, I'm main sure he will. What do 'ee think your mother, poor dear, would think o' me, if I let you go on acting like this, fretting your heart out, and your face getting that thin and pinched like? It come to me very clear a while agone, that us was being a bit selfish, God forgive us, in making such a moan for her. It baint as though there was the smallest morsel o' doubt about where she's gone, the blessed dear. And if she's happy, doing something she just loves to do, and I do believe she is; what for should we wish her back suffering again, just for our selfish comfort?"

"But I don't wish her back, if she must suffer so much, Lyddy. Of course I wouldn't be such a wretch



"SLE, I MAY PUT TRIS AWAY NOW SMAY I NOT?" -PAGE 9

as that. Only, why was there any need at all, for her to suffer so dreadfully? I cannot understand it. Life gets more and more of a mystery to me."

"Ay, no more can I understand my dear chield; no more can I. But her seemed to know; and think 'twas all right to. An I'm free to confess, if ever I meet her in heaven it'll be all her work my getting there, t'will that."

Lydia's tears were falling fast now; and Zenobia wiped her own eyes as she replied gently—

"She would have thought her pain richly rewarded, had she been able to hear that, I know, perhaps she does hear it now, who can tell? Very well, Lyddy; if I can see my way to going I will do so. If Miss Congdon can, she shall make me a dress in readiness. But of course I cannot leave until the holidays commence next week."

## CHAPTER VIII.

A GOLDEN sunset, and a sunny dawn.

"OH, Zennie, you darling, how glad I am to see you here at last, why you are looking better already, I declare! The mere ride appears to have done you good; so what will sea air and bathing do?"

"Wonders I hope. The journey has been delightful, not too hot for comfort; and the rain last night, not only laid the dust, but washed the hedges, and brought out the perfumes to perfection, it really was almost as good as a garden; all along the hedge top for ever so far, flourished masses of purple vetch, and—"

"Isn't it splendid?" broke in Violet, "I don't

believe it can grow to greater perfection anywhere else."

"And are not the big horse-daisies fine? I am so fond of them."

"Indeed they are, it is a grand drive altogether but I want to tell you—Isn't it jolly?—Mrs. Trevithick, next door to where we are staying, has let us have her front bedroom for you! So you have only to slip in by the back door for meals, if you like, and we are having such good times. Dunheved appears to have migrated here in force, and every body is as pleasant as possible. How could they help being pleasant though, with weather like this? Here we are, don't you think the dear old Crescent looks prettier than ever?"

"It always has appeared to be very near perfection in my eyes, ever since mother and I had such happy times that summer."

Her lips quivered, and tears rose to the bright eyes as she glanced towards the cottage at the end of the row.

"Yes dear, I know," whispered Violet, clasping the girl's arm more closely. "But please don't be miserable, you will try not, won't you?"

Zenobia smiled bravely, as she met her friend's pleading glance, then replied—

"I certainly do not intend to be, Vi, if I had, it would have been wiser for me to remain at home, don't you think so? But I cannot entirely forget."

"No, you darling, of course you can't. Just watch the cows in the meadow, if you wake in time for the milking to-morrow morning, they are such a joke; I should not like to be dairy maid I know that! To-day, one mischievous little white one; she generally seems to be the leader of the riots—upset can, girl,

stool, and all, into a pit, nearly drenching her with warm milk! A lad who was passing shouted lustily—

Who'd go a milking?
Ay well-a-day!
When the white cow kicks
At the smell of the say?
Of the milk she do spill,
Jane always takes her fill,
Ay, well-a-day!
But its sad, sad, sad,
And its bad, bad, bad,
Who'll pay the Maister?
Lawks won't he be mad?
Ay well-a-day!

"'Jane," was not prostrate long though! But springing to her feet, flung her stool at him, just missing his curly head, so, with a grin, he promptly took to his heels. Here we are though; see, there is mother, she sent the children out of the way, that you might at least have a peaceful welcome."

Kindhearted Mrs. Tremaine was stouter than ever, and, even in her light muslin dress, seemed to be painfully hot; as she sat at the open window fanning herself vigorously. When the two girls appeared, she hastened to the door, and kissing Zenobia tenderly said—

"Now just come into my room for a wash, then you shall have some tea before all the small fry return. You would hardly have much dust while travelling to-day?"

"No, it was not at all unpleasant. Not too hot either; I was telling Vi how charming the hedges were."

"Are they not? Our dear old Cornish lanes are perfectly lovely at this time of the year. I hope no 'improving' vandals, will tamper with them during my

time, at least. Imagine all those beauties being demolished in favour of bare, horrid, stone walls?"

"Horror! Why Cornwall would be Cornwall no longer, under those conditions!"

"You left all well at home, I hope?"

"Yes, father has promised to come out for Sunday with the doctor. And Lydia will strain every nerve to make him comfortable I am quite sure."

"That is right. Then you will be able to enjoy the

change with an easy mind I trust."

"Oh, Zennie," cried Violet, "will you be too tired to watch the sunset to-night?"

"No indeed, Vi. I certainly mean to visit Summer-leas before the day closes. You are going of course?"

"That is just what I was about to propose. I think it will be splendid this evening, the sky is so cloudless."

"That's all right then. This cottage is surely much larger than it used to be, Mrs. Tremaine?"

"Yes, it and the next have been thrown into one, there would have been a division in the camp else; all my party could not possibly be packed into one of the other little boxes."

"I thought this room had grown unaccountably. How pretty you have made it look."

"Oh, not many of these things are ours, there was a box full of curios packed away upstairs which Mrs. Dangar gave us leave to utilize, so Vi and Lily, have, as you may imagine, had a glorious time."

"Yes, wasn't it a shame to keep all those lovely shells, fans, and feathers hidden away? See, this is a whole bird's skin, I have no idea what kind; but are not the colours splendid? He must have looked simply gorgeous in the sunlight."

"Come, girls, you can examine everything another

time, if we should get a wet day, it would be fine occupation for you all, to discover everything you possibly could, about the home, and history, of these foreign treasures. Tea is ready now however, and, unless we are quick our quiet will be disturbed. I do not believe even your friend Mrs. Metherell can turn out better cream than that, Zenobia. What do you say?"

"It looks delicious, but her's is quite as good, I cannot allow more than that you know; can I? Strawberries I declare! what beauties. I have not seen such fine ones all the summer."

"Here comes your luggage, Zennie. Shall I go in with it?"

"I had better go as well. That small box does not belong to me."

"Beg pardon, Miss; but it hev got your name on any-how, look 'ee there."

"Has it? Let me see; so it has! Well you had better leave it then, I suppose. What time do you start in the morning?"

"Ten sharp, Miss."

"Thank you. Then if I give you a note for our house will you leave it in passing?"

"Iss, for sure, Miss, and be proud to." Bowing himself out with a delighted grin, as he pocketed his fee, Dick Cobbledick sauntered off, muttering—

"Dash me, aint she a beauty though? If I was yon chap, wi' the white hands, and glass in his eye, as seemed so gone on her, I'd try to go in an' win, I would that! Dash me if I wouldn't! Blow me, I'd do for her for half a tip, a heap more'n some would get out o' me, for a double one, I would that! By St. Swithins its true; drat him an his rainy days."

Zenobia was just beginning to unpack, and shake out her dresses, when Violet exclaimed—

"There they come, that is Sep's voice I am certain; so I must leave you for a while. Just come and look! Is it any wonder they are fond of Bude, eh?"

"No indeed! they appear every-one, to be as jolly as the proverbial 'sandboys'!"

Each of the noisy party, Lily included, were perched on donkeys, at whose much enduring heels, ragged lads raced, and shouted vociferously; the four younger ones, being securely fastened in panniers, were not apparently in the slightest degree discomposed, at the hubbub and clatter; even the baby sucked her thumb contentedly, as she looked round with sleepy blue eyes.

Rose, catching sight of Zenobia's figure in its clinging black dress, stilled her noisy laughter, as she entered the house, and, throwing herself, with quite unwonted ardour into her mother's arms, kissed and hugged her passionately.

"There, there, Rose my dear, that will do," said Mrs. Tremaine, lightly returning the kiss, "I must attend to baby now. Must I not, mother's precious?"

"Mother never guessed why I did that," muttered the child as she bounded upstairs. "It would be awfully horrid to have no mother, that's what I was thinking."

After Zenobia had unpacked, and distributed in her usual orderly fashion, the contents of her trunk, she sat down at the open window, glad of the opportunity to muse for a few moments undisturbed. The racket next door during the children's "tubbing" not tempting her to put in an appearance just yet. Across the canal, numbers of tired donkeys were browsing on the green, round the newly-painted lifeboat, which, elevated

on a kind of stage, out of harm's way, was a very attractive object. There appeared to be quite a number of visitors in the little village, for parties kept straying in from all directions. Presently the old church clock on the hill chimed the hour of eight. Where was Violet? If they did not start at once there would be no sunset for them to-night. Catching up her hat, and a fleecy white shawl, for it would be chilly sitting on Summerleas, she ran downstairs; meeting Violet and Lily just coming in.

meeting Violet and Lily just coming in.

"I began to think you girls had forgotten the sunset," she cried, "shall we be in time?"

"Just, if we hurry now. We will go out at your door, or someone is sure to call us back."

The evening was delightful, a fresh breeze blowing from the sea, played with Zenobia's long curls, and was strong enough to render it a pleasant effort to meet, and repel its advances, as the girls gradually mounted the hill to the point they sought. The grass was short, firm, and springy; while tiny white shells crackled in myriads beneath their tread. Evidently other people also expected a grand display from the kingly sun this evening, for many a group besides their own were hurrying in the same direction.

" Oh!"

The lookout was rounded at last, and there, out at sea, sending a long stream of molten gold, across the rippling waters: was the prospect they had come to witness. No wonder Zenobia drew her breath in an ecstacy of wordless admiration! It was splendid! The huge glowing ball appeared to be just touching the waters, and setting them on fire, instead of allowing its own heat to be extinguished.

"Can't you fancy you hear the water fizzing?" said Lily. "I declare I can!"

"I never saw it half so grand," remarked Violet presently. "It must be in honour of your arrival, Zennie."

But, after that first involuntary exclamation Zenobia was silent, words appeared almost a desecration here. The seat they coveted was occupied, so, taking her stand at the edge of the cliff, where the view was entirely uninterrupted, she remained speechless and motionless; until the very last speck had disappeared; and, even the fiery glow his majesty left behind, was fading rapidly. Then, with a long drawn sigh of utter content, turned away, saying—

"It is worth anything; anything, to have seen that. I shall never forget it."

"Nor shall I."

Who was it spoke?

Looking up with a start, the girl discovered that one of her fellow-passengers on the coach to-day, was standing at her side, and, unobserved, had been witnessing the glorious sight in her own vicinity. She blushed, and bowed shyly, as he raised his hat, then, linking her arm in Violet's, turned away.

"Who is that gentleman, Zennie?"

"I have no idea. He rode by my side on the coach to-day. I do not think it was very nice of him to startle me like that. Let us go down on the Breakwater, see the tide is coming in, and I always think it is nicer there in the evening, than at any time else."

"Isn't it rather late?"

"No. There won't be very many people about, that is all the better. I am longing to climb the Chapel Rock."

"You'll not be able to do that to-night any how,

see the waves keep washing right over; its no fun getting drenched."

"I believe I could manage it; and escape a wetting too. However it is time I learned to be proper I suppose!"

"There that gentleman is again I declare, he is surely

following us."

"Nonsense, Lily. If I thought that I should turn back, at once."

Zenobia was so evidently annoyed at Lily's conjecture, that the girl said no more, she was right however; at some distance behind the girls, as they sauntered townwards in the rapidly increasing darkness, finding the tide too high for venturing the breakwater's length, the stranger followed, contriving to discover, easily enough, where they were staying, turning away as the door closed on them with a satisfied smile, he sought his own hotel remarking—

"A fair trio, a very fair trio, but that girl is more than pretty, she is lovely as a dream; I wonder who she can be, and how I can get to know?"

When Zenobia, pleading weariness, had retired somewhat early to her own nest, she suddenly remembered the strange unfamiliar box, which had arrived with her own, and proceeded to seek for, and open it. Who could it be from? Securely packed and unmistakeably directed to herself as it was, yet not a clue could she discover, as to the unknown friend, who, by some mysterous enchantment had supplied the fulfilment of her unspoken desires! Books, and such books! "Little Dorrit," "The Old Curiosity Shop," "Harold," "Hypatia," "Hereward the Wake," and last, but by no means least, a volume of "Longfellow's" poems! What a supply of literary treasures, such as she had never dreamed of possessing for her very own; yet, the title

page of each volume, was inscribed with her own name in the neatest of round characters. Oh dear, who could have sent them? Dare she take possession, and enjoy to the full so mysterious a gift?

Zenobia, as we have before remarked, was a Cornish maiden, and therefore, strongly imbued with the superstitious element; as she opened book after book, it was with a growing feeling of uncanniness, which only increased as her candle burnt low in its socket; until presently, she had very nearly convinced herself, that the mother whom she so passionately loved, was, in some mysterious, unaccountable manner, concerned in supplying her lonely daughter with these new riches.

Was it true? Dare she believe that, even now, the same love was guarding her, and would continue to wrap her round, secure from every harm, teaching and guiding, even though invisible? She placed each book back again lovingly, as this thought took possession of her heart, then, taking up her mother's own bible, which had been placed in her hands, almost with the last words that mother uttered; she opened it and read "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The book opened of itself at the words which were faintly underlined, and the note written by the dear dead hand on the margin bore eloquent testimony to their truth. The girl's wrapped, absorbed look, as she sat holding the bible, with her abundant hair flowing in careless grace round her white shoulders, and eyes unconscious of any surroundings, but those which faith and hope conjured up; gave her almost the appearance of a medieval saint. Presently the little gold watch at her elbow, which had also belonged to her mother, caught her eye, and startled her by announcing the time to be long past midnight. Tears were falling

softly, but much of the lonely sadness had departed as, rising, she knelt with the open book before her, and prayed—to whom? Half unconsciously, though the words were addressed to "Our Father" the thoughts they embodied were entirely of the mother, whom she had canonized in her own young heart, as having been the purest, truest of saints. "Queen Zenobia, they call me," she murmured, laying her head at length on the pillow; "Mother said, however, that I could only really be queenly, as I learned to conquer self. Well, I will try, though I can never hope to become as perfect as she was, my darling. But I must hope to meet her again, and, to do that, must live worthily by God's help; perhaps after all, that was why he took her to himself."

No wonder the girl slept late, the following morning; eighteen, and nightly vigils are not suitable boon companions, and certainly do not agree perfectly.

Lily very much desired to arouse the sleeper for the customary walk before breakfast, but Mrs. Tremaine vetoed the proposal—

"Remember," she said, "Zenobia, poor child, is not in as good condition as you are, so be reasonable in your demands on her strength."

They had just returned, rosy, and ravenously hungry, when the girl, discovering how late it was, presented herself with an apology at the noisy breakfast-table.

"Well, my dear; here you are then; no worse for yesterday's exertions, I hope?"

"No indeed, Mrs. Tremaine. I am sorry to be so late"

"Nonsense, child, you are not really late; it is these incorrigibles of mine, who will persist in being astir so early. Do you feel inclined to join the bathing party?"

"Oh yes! of course."

"Hurry then, the tide is just right this morning between nine and ten."

"Are the children coming?"

"Yes, to be sure, even including the baby. You must not wait for us though, Maggie and I will be responsible for the nursery party to-day."

It was a delicious morning, and, fetching one of her new books, Zenobia was soon ready to start. Group after group were wending their way in the same direction, and far ahead went the donkey-carts of the two brown-limbed women, who shared the custom of the bathers between them, each attracting her quota of followers, and a good deal of rivalry went on between their several adherents!

"How fat Mrs. Royse is getting!" Zenobia observed. "I declare salt-water seems to agree with her, quite as well as it does with Henrietta!"

"Wait till you see Henrietta though. I can tell you she is a caution, and no mistake!"

"Look, there she is!" cried Lily.

"Where?"

"There, just beginning the descent. I should like to see her roll down."

"What a shame, Lily!" laughed Violet. "Let us walk faster though, or all the best gowns will have gone. You will bathe of course, Zennie?"

"Not to-day, I think; do you mind?"

"No, why should I? Only-won't you be dull?"

"Not in the least. Oh! is not the sea splendid? I believe I will sit up here, and watch. It's much more amusing here than on the beach, when the tide

is in so far. I have brought a book, look, so shall not be at all lonely."

"A book? Let me see what it is," questioned Violet. "Dickens, I declare! That's splendid. You will lend it to me, of course? I read some of his when I was away, but not that one. They are a treat. Don't you think so?"

"I have not read one yet."

"Then you have a feast in store. You will be charmed with them."

"Oh, bother books," cried Lily, impatiently. "Are you coming? There, I knew we should be behind, if we sauntered like this, that girl has got my favourite gown."

"Never mind, there are plenty more to choose from."

Nevertheless, the two girls ran off, descending the cliff side at a breakneck pace which would have proved imminently perilous to the necks of less surefooted damsels.

Left to herself Zenobia soon discovered a snug hollow, in which she could remain almost unobserved; yet enjoy an uninterrupted view of the beach, and Bristol Channel, on whose dark line, athwart the glistening waters, numerous vessels were coming and going, forming a most attractive prospect, as their white sails glistened in the morning sunlight, gliding along on the foam crested waves. Her nest proved a very comfortable one, and the scene full of peaceful beauty, as, after a short interval, shouts of laughter, and shrill childish screams, were wafted towards her from the beach, as group after group, clad in picturesque or commonplace bathing garb, waded into the shallow waves breaking on the firm yellow sand. What a long line of girls, and women, Mrs. Royse

had in charge; and how excitedly she shouted her commands to each extreme of her lively crescent!

With fingers clasped round her knees Zenobia watched, trying to identify some of the disguised figures, and presently gave vent to an amused laugh as she noticed a break in the circle. Who could that stout lady be, struggling so wildly to regain her footing, as wave after wave, again and again upset her? What a comical sight she was! A clumsy mermaid indeed, among the bowing ducking figures by whom she was surrounded!"

See though, someone else has broken loose now, and, rising on the crest of a splendid wave is striking out boldly seawards.

"Why," she exclaimed aloud after watching narrowly for a few moments. "It's Vi, I declare! How well she swims! I never knew she could do that before! But it's rather dangerous here I fear."

However Violet, in obedience to the reiterated warnings of Mrs. Royse, soon rejoined the more cautious party; and, opening her book Zenobia became in a few moments so deeply absorbed in its contents as to lose all consciousness of what was transpiring in the actual world around her.

# CHAPTER IX.

## GUILE VICTORIOUS.

As Zenobia read on, and on, growing ever more absorbed in the progress of her story, the crowd below had continued growing until the beach presented quite a kaleidoscopic scene, of ever shifting colour.

What if there were no barrel organs, or noisy minstrels. Their presence cannot always be considered an unmixed blessing, surely? There was, at any rate, plenty of shouting and laughter, as barelegged children defied the advancing waves, sometimes getting a good splashing as punishment for their temerity, which only added to the fun. The tide was slowly receding to-day however, so no wading proved necessary this morning, on the part of any luckless damsel, who, having lingered too long with the bathers returned to find portions of her garb floating seawards as frequently happens on this primitive beach, where bathing machines are conspicuous by their absence!

Violet and Lily, as soon as their own dips were successfully accomplished, went to the assistance of the nursery party, who had arrived in the meantime, and, in the subsequent excitement, Zenobia's lengthened absence was barely commented on.

Across the downs just now a gentleman is strolling, glass in hand, which he raises ever and anon, to take observations, ostensibly—should any passer-by happen to be near,—of the ever passing vessels out at sea, but really, spite of his somewhat prim appearance, of the bathers below, who present comical groups enough frequently, to attract the notice of any onlooker, however personally uninterested they might be. He is so absorbed, as to pay no heed to his steps, beyond taking instinctive care to avoid the extreme edge of the untrustworthy cliff, with the result that he is brought to a sudden stop, by stumbling head first into a hole, and turning a somersault over its youthful occupant.

Zenobia's sunshade is not likely to be improved by the unexpected rencontre.

Dropping her book, the girl starts to her feet with a cry of dismay, and backs immediately, perilously near

the jagged, uneven edge in her rear; seeing which, the cause of her alarm, with horrorstruck face, clasps the trembling girl forcibly in his arms, and places her on safe ground above, exclaiming—

"How could I be so unpardonably awkward! What have I done? Forgive me if you can, I assure you my intrusion was entirely unintentional."

His whole appearance was so dejected, and, as Zenobia said afterward, so intensely funny, that she could scarcely resist the inclination to laugh, as she replied—

"I do not think there is much harm done after all, though you have given us both a fright."

"It is kind of you to say so, but—Why look at your sunshade! Will you let me try to put it right? Do, please," he continued, as she hesitated to relinquish her battered possession.

"Thank you, but it really does not matter. My book, though; I wonder where that went?"

"Had you a book? Stay, let me seek for it."

"What a clumsy idiot she must think me," he muttered, while descending the rugged steps. "I seem doomed to make a fool of myself whenever I come across that girl, and, by jove, what a beauty she is! Who the dickens can she be? How can I obtain an introduction? Charles Penmaur, my man, you are a victim at last, there is no use whatever in trying to deny that exceedingly patent fact!"

Yes, there lay an open book on the rocks below, and decidedly shaken in its constitution by so sudden a descent. Remounting hastily, Mr. Penmaur restored the illtreated volume to its fair owner, saying—

"The fall has not improved it, unfortunately, as the accident was so entirely my fault will you allow me

to give you another copy in exchange for this, Miss Marsh?"

"Oh no, no indeed!"

He had made good use of his opportunity for discovering her name, thought the girl; and, drawing herself up, continued distantly—

"My friends will be growing uneasy at my long absence, so I will rejoin them now. Good-morning."

And to his chagrin she turned briskly away, be-

And to his chagrin she turned briskly away, becoming in a few moments one of a distant group on the now wide expanse of shining sand, where he could not follow; this stretch of beach being the ladies own especial property each day until noon was passed during the bathing season.

"I have gained something by my clumsiness at any rate," Mr. Penmaur thought with a shrug of his shoulders, as he walked from the spot; "I know her name, and do not intend to lose sight of her again until she is in a fair way of knowing mine in exchange."

The recent bathers, in all manner of deshabille, were

The recent bathers, in all manner of deshabille, were beginning to retrace their steps now, so he retreated to a discreet distance, and, while pretending to be absorbed in his paper, watched each group furtively, for the figure he had so rapidly learned to admire. "Zenobia," he remarked softly, "What a strange name, yet how well it appears to suit its bearer. Though so rapid in her movements, that splendid girl has the making of a queen in her, I can see. There they come! what a motley group! Now, how can I manage to ingratiate myself with that pleasant looking matron?"

"Sep, catch me before I get to the flagstaff. Come along," cried Rose, flying off, with her brother in hot pursuit, while small fat Daisy toddled after, crying—

"Me go too," the words rapidly changing to a howl of disappointment as she found herself alone, and outdistanced. Daisy was not in the habit of giving in, though, young as she was, so, setting her small teeth firmly, and stifling her sobs, she bravely followed in the wake of the shouting couple, now far ahead; but, alas, an unseen hillock in the way brought her speedily to the ground, with renewed cries of dismay and disappointment.

Springing towards the prostrate child, Mr. Penmaur lifted her gently, and succeeded, as Mrs. Tremaine hurried forward, in quieting the little creature's angry and terrified sobs, so speedily that, looking at him gravely, when securely seated in her mother's arms, she pronounced him to be "A nice gemplum," and signified emphatically her desire for an extended acquaintance, by holding out her arms to be taken.

"There, Sir," Mrs. Tremaine said, laughingly; "my small Daisy has thanked you herself for your prompt kindness. Allow me to do the same."

"Pray do not say another word, Madam," he replied. "I am only too thankful that an opportunity has offered itself of retrieving a blunder I made a short time since in connection with another of your party which indeed might easily have become a tragedy." He glanced, as he spoke, at the group of girls who remained at some distance.

"Indeed! I have heard nothing of it."

"Then the tall young lady in white has not mentioned how narrowly she escaped a fall from the cliff through my clumsiness? It was kind of her."

"You must surely be exaggerating the danger, sir. My young friend has not appeared in the slightest degree agitated since she rejoined us."

"Then she is not one of your own daughters, Madam?"

"Oh no. Come, Daisy, say good-morning to the gentleman, and come with mamma."

But Daisy had decided differently, so merely shook

her curly head gravely.

"Daisy, dear, do as mamma tells you—say good-morning."

But Daisy chose to be perverse, and, having taken a sudden fancy for her new acquaintance, would not be persuaded of the demands propriety made. Clinging round the stranger's neck, she said decidedly—

"No; Daisy 'ant to be tarried."

"Nonsense, child; be good and come with mamma."

Mr. Penmaur, though as a rule rather afraid of children, felt inclined to consider this specimen a gem of the first water. Clasping the little figure more closely, he said—

"Pray allow me, madam, to comply with the child's request; I was going towards the town. There is my card, and at present my abode is 'The Falcon Hotel'."

It would have been churlish to refuse, so, somewhat doubtfully, Mrs. Tremaine walked at the side of her new acquaintance in the direction of the wondering group, who were puzzled at her long delay.

"I declare mother is bringing that gentleman with

her; what is up now, I wonder?" exclaimed Lily.

"Perhaps Daisy has really hurt herself, poor little mite," Zenobia conjectured.

"Not she. Listen; she is laughing heartily, the little puss."

"Then let us walk on, Vi, will you? We look such a lot all together."

Zenobia had recognized the gentleman, and did not care to face him again at present.

However, he was of a different opinion, and, before

the Crescent was reached, had managed to ingratiate himself so well with her friends as to gain an invitation to join a party which was talked of, to Widmouth, on the afternoon of the following day.

"Zennie, my dear, how grave you are; what is the

matter?" whispered Violet.

"Nothing much. I was only thinking how unlikely it is that a gentleman would really care to join a children's party, Vi."

"Why should he say he would, if he does not mean it? Of course he will. If not, it is his own look-out. He certainly did not hesitate to accept the invitation."

"Come girls, come; dinner is waiting, and I assure

you these children are hungry, if you are not."

"We are coming, mother."

"Well done, Charles Penmaur," remarked that gentleman, as, after lifting his hat to the party inclusively, he walked rapidly away. "Your usual good-luck has not deserted you, old fellow. 'Fortune favours the brave.' If it didn't, I should never have stumbled over that girl, of all people, this morning. What would my mother say, I wonder, to my sudden surrender before an unknown beauty?"

Charles Penmaur might well ask himself that question, for, though he usually succeeded in disguising the fact pretty successfully, yet it was quite true that he had actually passed his fortieth birthday, without succumbing, in a single instance, to the influence of feminine charms. Yet, no love-sick boy had ever become more completely a victim to the blind god's enchantment than, to his own great surprise, this cynical gentleman found himself now. Without making, either, even a faint effort to escape from the thraldom of which he was fully conscious.

During the remainder of that day he could settle

to nothing. Where was the use of trying to read, when the same lovely face, and rich golden brown curls appeared persistently between the page and his eyes? Letter writing proved even a more disastrous failure, for he could not very well dilate to his agent, who expected a purely business epistle, on the charms of a certain queenly creature, named Zenobia, of whom he had become enamoured! Nor would it be wise to make mention of her in a letter to his mother, for, should that austere lady take alarm, she was quite capable of putting in a sudden appearance, which action on her part, would have the effect of intensifying very much her dutiful son's discomfort. At present this was a deliciously novel sensation, one pang of which he would not choose to escape.

Abandoning at length all attempts at even desultory employment, and anxious to avoid rencontres with other visitors at the crowded hotel, Mr. Penmaur, as the evening shadows began to lengthen, went out on a tour of investigation.

In what way could he provide something towards to-morrow's picnic fare, without being considered impertinent?

There was no inspiration to be gleaned from the shop windows of Bude, evidently, so, starting off at a rapid pace, he crossed the fields to Stratton, and, by offering a decidedly fancy price, succeeded in bringing back triumphantly a basket of fresh garden fruit, which would delight the children, at any rate, if no one else. Half ashamed of the escapade, he smuggled his treasure unnoticed upstairs, and retired content, to dream of his inamorata.

Meanwhile, as soon as their early dinner was over, Mrs. Tremaine persuaded the tired children to follow her own example, and lie down for a short time. Zenobia, followed by Lily and Violet, was stealing away to her own quarters, when Ted, now a big lad home from college, ran after her, saying—

"I say, Zennie, have you any more books with

you?"

"Yes, Ted. Why? Would you like to borrow one?"

"Yes, awfully, if you wouldn't mind lending me a nice one. I'd be tremendously careful."

"What would suit you, I wonder? There is one by Kingsley."

"Oh golly, is there? May I have that? Which is it?"

"Hereward the Wake."

"Crickey, you don't say so? I want to read that more than anything."

Ted writhed in ecstatic contortions at the mere anticipation of so much pleasure in store.

"Very well, you shall have it then. Just wait a minute. You will keep it clean, I am sure, for it is quite new. I have not even read it myself yet."

"May I take it down to the beach?" the boy ques-

tioned eagerly, when Zenobia returned.

"Anywhere, as long as you bring it back safely."

"No fear. It's awfully good of you to let me have it."

"I should just think it is!" exclaimed Violet, catching sight of the volume. "I am quite sure I should not have done so."

"It's a good thing everybody isn't quite so selfish as you," retorted her brother, bounding away.

Throwing open the window to its widest extent, and lowering the blind, to exclude as much as possible of the sun's fierce rays, Zenobia remarked—

"I don't know what you girls feel like, but I think it

is far too hot for lounging in our dresses. Fetch your dressing-gowns, and we will each have a book; what do you say?

"So we will. I say Lily, bring mine in here, will you. There is no need for us both to go back again.

It is hot."

"Very well," replied Lily, good-naturedly.

"You talk quite largely about books, Zennie. How many have you brought, pray?" enquired Violet.

"Such a store! Say what you would like best. I'll

be the fairy godmother, and do some conjuring."

"Let me see, now."

Having removed her dress, Violet threw herself on the floor beneath the open window, and with bare arms clasped over her head, remained for some moments apparently lost in thought; until Lily, returning, evoked an indignant protest, by enveloping her head in the folds of a light muslin dressing-gown.

"That's just too bad of you, Lil! My head will look as though I had dragged it through a furze bush."

"What matters? There is no one here to see. I say, Zennie, how do you like Mr. Penmaur?"

"Who is Mr. Penmaur, pray?"

"Your rescuer of this morning, of course."

"What nonsense are you thinking of now, Lily?"

"Oh, he told mamma everything, so you need not pretend ignorance."

"What was there to tell? And who is 'he'?"

"Don't be so provoking, Zen; you know quite well! That gentleman we met this morning, of course," interposed Violet.

"Oh. Is his name Penmaur? Dear me, how did you find that out, I wonder?"

"Easily enough. He gave Mamma his card. And you need not pretend such ignorance, or innocence,

my queenly Zenobia. He is the same gentleman you met in coming out, I feel certain, and, if it is not a case of mutual admiration, I am strangely blind. There, Lily, am I not right? Witness those blushes!"

"Violet! How can you talk in that strain? It is not nice, even if it were true."

"What a prude you are, Zennie. That is the result of being alone so much. Why—"

"Why, Vi has a love affair of her own, so I suppose her eyes are sharper than ours," broke in Lily.

"Have you really, Vi? A genuine one, dear? Tell me all about it."

"Oh, perhaps you would not consider mine 'proper' if such a thing must not even be hinted at in your case."

"Well now, don't be vexed, either of you, please; but I really do think love, and lovers, are talked of far too lightly by most girls; and, after all, it is a very solemn subject."

"Oh good gracious! What is there solemn about

having a lover?"

"If he is a real lover it is *very* solemn, or so I think. If he is only playing, you are better without him. If I ever have one, he must be——"

"Well? What?"

"Oh, very different to any man I know. But tell me about yours, Vi, dear; I do hope he is really nice."

"Of course he is, but—Oh, don't let us talk about that now. Where are the books you promised us?"

There was a fretful tone in Violet's voice, so, glancing at her face, Zenobia quietly opened the box containing her treasures, thinking to herself—

"Violet is unhappy. I wonder what about?"

"Oh, Zennie," cried Lily, looking over her shoulder, what a splendid lot! Where did they come from? Vi, come here this minute; here is reading enough to last for months!"

"I should say so! Especially with our limited reading time. Did you buy them, Zennie? If you did, you know how to select good ones."

"No; they were in that box I did not recognize. You remember? I have no knowledge at all as to who sent them."

"What a queer thing! Some delightful unknown must have taken a fancy to your queenly ladyship. Eh, oh; see what it is to be a beauty! I shall

grow green with envy!

"Don't be ridiculous. Let us enjoy the treasures and be thankful, without speculating about the unknown donor. It may be some friend of mother's who sent them."

## CHAPTER X.

## THE THIN END OF THE WEDGE.

PATHER has come after all, then. There he is, sitting next to the Doctor. I am so glad."

The heavily laden coach had just dashed in, bear-

ing its contingent of fathers, brothers, and lovers, to spend Sunday with their families and friends, being met, of course, by a crowd of eager welcomers.

"Well mother, jolly as ever, I see. Yes, Zenobia, I have succeeded, you observe. I told your father that, if he really would not come, I must also be

deprived of the pleasure on which I had been existing, in anticipation, all the week; so at length he consented. Make the most of him now."

"Hurrah, father! Now we'll have some fun, won't we?"

"Of course we will, Sep, my boy. But have you not had any during the week, eh?"

"Oh, it's just awfully slow without you."

"Bless me, young man! you must be hard to please, eh? I can tell you it is slow enough at home."

Zenobia smiled gratefully at the genial doctor, who appeared in a fair way to be demolished by his numerous and enthusiastic family, as linking her arm in her father's, she led him away.

"It was good of you to come, father dear."

"I'm sure I can't see why. A man in my depressed condition is much better at home."

He spoke morosely, and looked haggard and worn.

"Hurrah, Zennie! Have you heard the news?"

"What news, Ted?"

"Why, we are to have the railway after all. They've carried the day! Hurrah!"

Ted quite forgot his recently acquired grown-up manner, and flung his cap high in the air, shouting wildly.

"Really?" replied Zenobia, almost as excited as himself. "Are you quite sure?"

"Sure as fate. It is true, isn't it, Mr. Marsh?"

"Yes, perfectly true, I suppose."

"Father says the town went mad last night. I wish I had been in for the fun," continued Ted. "They had a torchlight procession, and burned old Y——'s effigy outside the Castle afterwards; served him right, too."

"Poor old fellow. I am pleased though."

"What is there in that information for you to be

pleased about?"

"Why, how could I help it, father? It will make such a difference in every way. And our dear old town, with its ancient pedigree, has been kept in the shade quite long enough. It is high time its proper place was resumed again, I think."

"Well, how is this event to forward such a result?"

"How? Why, father, how is it to be prevented? Just think; we shall be in close touch now with the outside world. And the country people will have a larger and more remunerative market for their produce. That, at least, you will surely acknowledge to be a clear gain."

"Rather a doubtful benefit, I should say. At least to the shallow pockets of the majority of our towns-

people."

"I don't fancy I was thinking of them at all," Zenobia confessed. "Still, such a change will surely work both ways, bringing other necessaries more readily and cheaply to hand, as well as taking away home produce. Oh, anyway, it cannot but be an advantage."

"Umph. That remains to be proved."

"Well?" Mr. Marsh questioned presently, "You have been enjoying yourself, I suppose? Young people forget so easily; happily for them."

"Father! No, I could never, never forget. But some of the bitterness has gone."

"What bitterness was there to begin with, as far as you were concerned? That was all on my side, and will never leave me—never!" he continued, vehemently. "I am cursed, cursed most heavily."

"Oh father, how can you say so?" Zenobia was startled; she had never seen him moved in this manner

before. "Nothing in connection with mother could ever be turned into curses, I am certain. Never a gentler nature lived."

"Don't I know that? But there, it is impossible that you should understand what I mean. I advise you not to try. Pray God such a burden as I am bearing may never rest on your shoulders."

What could he possibly refer to? His haggard face testified very emphatically to the truth of his words; some heavy weight evidently oppressed him. But when his daughter attempted some soothing reply, he interrupted harshly—

"Not another word. Quite enough has been said already—too much, possibly."

It appeared probable at first that the silent, morose man would somewhat damp the pleasure of the reunions, but Doctor Tremaine's genial good-nature very soon put an end to that state of things. Instead of curbing his children's high spirits, he only instigated them to higher flights of nonsense, until his wife insisted emphatically on bed for the little ones, before they completely lost their heads.

"Dear, dear papa," exclaimed Daisy, with strong emphasis, as she hugged and kissed him, on saying good-night, "I'se show you my new 'gemplum' in the morning."

"Your new 'gemplum'? Pray who can that be, pussie? Another dollie, eh?"

"No, no; a real live 'gemplum.' Oh such a nice one."

"What does the child mean?" he asked, looking at his wife enquiringly.

"Oh, it's a new acquaintance she has formed. A Mr. Penmaur. I will tell you all I know about him by and bye."

"What do you young folk say to a stroll before it grows darker? Can you join us, mamma?"

" Hardly, I fear."

"Very well, put on your hats, girls. What has become of that lad of mine, I wonder?"

"If you mean Ted, Doctor, I saw him go out a few

minutes since," said Zenobia.

"The dickens you did, my dear! What does the young rogue mean, by treating his father like this, I should like to know? Come along, Marsh, a brush with the sea breezes will do us both good; clear away some cobwebs before to-morrow, perhaps."

As Zenobia still kept at her father's side when they left the house, Doctor Tremaine remarked in an

injured tone-

"The ingratitude of some people is beyond belief! I should not have thought a certain valued acquaintance of mine could behave like this. My dear girls, our queenly Zenobia appears to have changed! How do you account for it?"

"Oh, Doctor, in what way am I ungrateful? What

do you mean?" said the girl, turning.

"Dear me! Is it possible you overheard my remark, Miss Marsh?

"Of course I did! And equally of course you intended me to do so. Miss Marsh, indeed! What next, I wonder?"

"Well perhaps I did intend you to hear. As to the 'Miss Marsh,' how was I to know you had not, for some reason, become dignified with me? Here Vi and Lily, I want a more artistic arrangement of our group. You run ahead with our worthy pedagogue. Do not fear, I guarantee he will not venture on giving you any lessons now. I want a long serious talk with this child. Away with you!"

"Which way shall we go?" questioned Violet,

laughing.

"Oh, upward and onward. We will catch you up, or at least keep you in sight, never fear. Now then, this is comfortable and as it should be," he continued, tucking Zenobia's hand beneath his arm. "Don't you want to hear my report?"

"Very much. But you were engaged, you see."

"So were you, young lady; and apparently intended keeping engaged. However, I am fortunately of a forgiving nature, and good news does not always improve with keeping, does it, eh?"

"Good news? Have you some for me?"

"That depends on your present state of mind. But I think so."

"Then please, Doctor dear, don't keep me in sus-

pense."

"Wait, wait; never be impatient—bad for the nervous system, you know. Messages first.—Lyddy bids me say that she is getting on so well she hopes you will content yourself here for a whole month."

"As if I could, possibly! No, no; I want to arrange that she has a short holiday as well. Dear old Lyddy! She needs a change as much as either of us, and; though she pretends to be sour sometimes, is really so kind."

"Yes, a genuine rough diamond. Let her have a change by all means, if she will take it. I question that, though. Now for my good news. You have not come into a fortune though; don't run away with that idea."

"That is hardly likely," she laughed. "How much longer do you intend keeping me waiting?"

"Dear me, dear me! You are as impatient as any other girl I find, though I have so high an opinion of

you. You were pleased about the railway news, I heard? Someone else is, also. Very much so."

"A good many people are, I should imagine. Who

are you referring to especially?"

"I thought you would have guessed, seeing he not only happens to be a friend, but also somewhat of a favourite of yours."

She glanced at him quickly. "Can you mean Zed?"

"Of course. Who else should I mean? In a letter this morning he tells me his position will be greatly improved by the event."

"I am so glad, but it is no surprise to me. I always

knew Zed would succeed eventually."

"I had large faith in the lad too. He appeared to me to possess the elements of success, or I should not have troubled myself about him. Patience and perseverance go a long way towards building up a name; farther than genius unaided by those attributes ever does."

"Zed has a modicum of the latter, I do believe

though."

"Undoubtedly; and he has had the sense to use it at every opportunity. Now he has once begun to climb, he will not remain stationary long together, mark my words. We shall be proud of him yet."

"I am now," thought the girl, but she did not say so.

"Good evening, Miss Marsh."

Zenobia started; for some reason she did not feel particularly pleased to recognize in the speaker her most recent acquaintance. However, it was not easy to avoid giving him, what he so plainly desired, an introduction. So, taking his offered hand, she repeated the formula—

"Mr. Penmaur-Doctor Tremaine."

"I am so pleased to have an opportunity of meeting you, sir," said the stranger effusively. "My acquaintance with your delightful family has given me great pleasure."

"You are kind to say so."

"Kind? No indeed! The kindness has been all on the other side."

"So,—this is Daisy's new acquaintance, eh?" pondered Mr. Tremaine, as they walked on; the new comer persistently monopolizing Zenobia's attention. "How the dickens have they scraped acquaintance with him?"

"Mr. Penmaur wishes to know if we are going to Poughhill Church to-morrow morning, Doctor," said Zenobia, presently.

"There was some mention of our doing so, I think, wasn't there?"

"If you do, may I be allowed to join your party? A lonely fellow like myself, is, I assure you, sincerely grateful for a little friendly intercourse."

"Oh, join us, and welcome, by all means, if you wish. Only, I expect we shall start in good time; it is a long walk. Zennie, my dear, your father and the girls are returning, I see. Shall we wait here for them?"

"Yes, if you like. Do not let us detain you, Mr. Penmaur!"

"Oh I may as well return now; it is growing late. I have not paid my respects to these young ladies to-day either," he added, as Lily came bounding forward. Evidently he had no intention of being shaken off.

As her father joined them, Zenobia said anxiously-

"You seem tired, father. I hope you have not walked too far!"

"No, I think not." He cast an enquiring glance at the stranger as he spoke; who, on his part, while replying to the lively greetings of the girls, was evidently taking stock of himself.

Presently he came forward, and Zenobia said

quietly-

"This is a gentleman we have met since coming here,

father,-Mr. Penmaur."

Mr. Marsh simply bowed; but delight at the success of his ruse rendered the stranger so interesting a companion, that presently, to the former's own surprise, the two gentlemen were engaged in an animated and apparently mutually interesting discussion, in which Zenobia delightedly joined; thinking to herself—"If father likes Mr. Penmaur, I will try to like him as well. I'm sure I can't understand why he repels me so much. It must be another case of 'Doctor Fell'."

"Now, Daddy dear," cried the sisters, each taking possession of an arm, "We have hardly had a word with you yet. Tell us all about everything."

"Judging from that prospect, young ladies," replied the doctor, nodding in the stranger's direction, "it appears to me that you certainly have the most to tell! Since when have my daughters contracted the habit of forming acquaintance with casual strangers? What does it mean?"

"Mean? What, Papa? Mr. Penmaur?" replied Violet. "Well, in the first place, he and Zennie came out on the same coach. Then the very next day, Zennearly tumbled over the cliff, and he saved her, I suppose. Afterward, as if that was not enough, Daisy must go and have a nasty fall close to where he was

sitting, and he picked her up. So you see, we could hardly avoid being civil, could we?"

"Especially when he gave mamma his card, and certainly seemed to want badly to be on friendly terms," continued Lily.

"Umph! Quite an interesting chapter of accidents, I declare! Any more of the same kind knocking about, eh?"

"No, Daddy dear. Now do tell us, has anybody got married, or anybody died?"

"Bless me, you see the papers, don't you? If not, you ought to, and deserve to remain ignorant. No; all minor considerations are swallowed up by the great railway event, at Dunheved, at present. Batches of men are already at work."

"How long will it take completing the line?"

"Not a great while, I fancy. It's a case of many hands, etcetera."

"Where will the station be?"

"Somewhere below us. Our side of the town, any-how."

"I positively cannot realize it," exclaimed Violet, delightedly. "Why, only imagine being able to get to Plymouth between breakfast and dinner!"

"And to London in one day! that will follow next, and be by far the most interesting result of the change to me," said Lily. "Getting to London someday, has been the dream of my life. Now, it is just possible I may realize my dream."

"What on earth makes such a country mouse as you want to go to London, ch?"

"Oh, it's just because I am a country mouse, Papa, perhaps. Anyhow, I do want to go. Imagine seeing all the places one reads about! Above all things I want to visit the Tower."

"You would be woefully disappointed, I expect."

But as his daughters chattered, their father listened with a divided attention. The animated conversation of the trio in his rear puzzled him. What sudden change had come over his usually taciturn friend, and the normally quiet, self-contained Zenobia?

"If the fellow has designs in that direction, I forsee difficulties," he thought. "Her queenship may be friendly, but, as to any love-making, I think, I really do

think, there will be found no opening."

Whatever the subject under discussion might be, it proved so interesting that, instead of parting at the gate as usual, Mr. Penmaur continued talking, and Zenobia presently joined her friends within, leaving her father still deeply engaged in airing his own particular views.

When he at length appeared, his face wore a more animated expression than it had done for many months.

"That is an extremely interesting, well-informed young fellow," he exclaimed in a pleased tone.

"Not so very young, anyhow," remarked the doctor,

dryly.

"He is no conceited boy, I grant; but a man who knows what he is talking about. I am pleased, very pleased, to have met with him."

"And I am pleased that you are pleased, father," remarked Zenobia with a smile; "so it is right all round."



# CHAPTER XI

#### ZEDEKIAH AND BERT.

ZEDEKIAH Peardon, is still at Plymouth, and possessed as of old by an intense desire for making discoveries.

Quite recently, however, he has outgrown the rooms in which he dwelt when Edward Marsh discovered the kindliness of his nature; so it will be useless seeking him there.

Instead, we will turn our steps in the direction where money is being made. Of course, as is invariably the case, this leads us into the grimiest part of the town. Here, up a flight of steps—whose acquaintance with a scrubbing brush and soap must be so distant as not to be at all worth mentioning—deafened as we mount by the constant roar and whirr of machinery, which is throbbing in all directions, above, beneath and around; we at length reach a tiny box of a room, the multiplicity of whose contents give it the appearance of being even smaller than it really is.

Close to the one grimy window, intently examining something through a magnifying glass, a man is standing. He is tall and brawny; his shirt sleeves rolled almost to the shoulder display wiry, muscular arms not burdened with any superfluity of adipose matter. Ever and anon he raises one hand mechanically to brush back the dark hair, which persists in falling in thick masses over his broad forehead, at present wrinkled in perplexity. Presently a spruce clerk runs lightly up the dingy staircase, exclaiming—

"Is that quotation ready, Zed?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Yes, Bert; it was ready at the time named, and is

lying yonder, look;" replied Zedekiah, without looking round.

"What are you up to now?" queried the clerk, loitering.

"There is a peculiar action in that new engine which puzzles me. I want to discover its secret."

"I thought as much! Your everlasting botheration over wheels, cogs, screws, etcetera, will turn your brain, old man, if you are not careful. I say, have you anything particular on hand to-night?"

"Nothing very special. Why?"

"I wish you would come with me for a row down the river then."

"What time?"

"Seven."

"Well, I'll try. How far do you want to go?"

"Oh, four or five miles; I'm not particular. There's the boss! That's his step, sure as a gun. Just my luck!" he muttered, hurrying away.

"What are you doing in Peardon's department, Hocking?" queried his employer sharply.

"I just ran up to fetch this estimate, sir."

"Estimate? What estimate? Blundell's? Isn't that gone yet? Why, it was promised before noon! See that it is despatched at once; your delays are most provoking."

"What difference can it make, whether the thing goes early or late, so long as it *does* go?" muttered Bert sulkily, as he returned to his desk.

Three hours later the two young men met at the rendezvous. Bert was the first to appear, and had been impatiently striding up and down for some moments when Zed came in view.

"Oh, then you have not forgotten after all?"

remarked the former tartly. "Why couldn't you be in time?"

"I am hardly ten minutes behind, Bert. One would think we had a most important engagement to keep!"

"Well, how do you know I haven't?"

"If you have, the prospect is not a very pleasant one, I should say, judging from your present mood. However, come along, now that I am here."

What a contrast the two young fellows presented, as they shot their light boat through the water, with long, powerful strokes. Each was attractive in his way. Bert perhaps the more generally so. His handsome face, and instinctive desire when in company to create a good impression, winning for him many admirers. The depths of Zed's nature were seldom gauged, save by the few, who, having made a call on his sympathies, and received aid, had discovered how tender a heart was concealed beneath that quiet self-contained manner. Let anyone with whom he came into contact appear to be really and truly needing and deserving assistance, they would certainly before long have reason to bless him. No self-denial was too great, if, by effort on his part, someone was made happy. But, should his kindness prove to have been wasted on an unworthy subject, further appeal would be useless from that quarter. To the lazy or vicious he could be as adamant.

Zed firmly believed that it was every man's duty to assist a fellow mortal whom misfortune might have overtaken, if it were at all possible; "But," he would say sternly, "I will make vice easy for no human being."

To-night Bert, who was usually so volatile, appeared strangely preoccupied. As for Zedekiah, his thoughts

generally had so many attractive pathways in which to wander that an opportunity for meditation never came amiss to him.

To-day, none but Bert would have had power to tempt him away from his dingy office as long as any daylight lingered, for the problem which was puzzling him during the afternoon remained still an unsolved mystery, of course taking full possession of his thoughts as he rowed mechanically onward.

They had journeyed for perhaps three miles along the smooth, verdure fringed stream, when Bert began to manifest some interest in his surroundings, and, as they progressed, scanned the bank on their right eagerly. In a few moments his face brightened, and nodding towards the shore, he exclaimed hurriedly—
"Pull in, old fellow. Zed, I say! What on earth

are you doing? Can't you see I am not rowing? Stop, man!"

"Eh? What's the matter, Bert? I was thinking of something. Want to turn about? Very well!"
"Turn? No! I want to land!"

He had raised his hat, and waved a hand, in delighted greeting to someone on the grassy margin, as he spoke.

Glancing in the same direction, Zed saw that two girlish figures were standing on the bank half hidden by the tall ferns and bracken which grew around them.

"Do you know those ladies, Bert?" he asked.

"Know them? Of course I do. If you would come down from the clouds you would find you knew one of them yourself."

"Why, can we possibly have come so far? It is surely Miss Inglis!" Zedekiah replied in tones of astonishment.

"Yes, and her friend, Miss Penmaur."

As the boat neared the bank Bert sprang eagerly ashore, leaving to Zedekiah the task of securing it firmly.

"This is a pleasure!" he exclaimed gaily. "What good fairy whispered to you ladies the boon you would confer by walking in this direction?"

"How absurd you are, Mr. Hocking," simpered Sybil Penmaur affectedly; giving him her hand, which he held, unrebuked, much longer than propriety demanded. "One would imagine to hear you talk, the fairies had made you an especial favourite of theirs!"

"Well, I shall begin to imagine they have, if they procure me many such pleasures. I might have a worse faith; do you not agree with me, Miss Inglis?"

Mabel Inglis smiled quietly as she replied-

"The fairies never make favourites of ungrateful people, I am told. Therefore, unless you wish to forfeit their good opinion, it would be as well to wait for your companion."

"Oh, Zed is always company for himself," replied Bert, carelessly. "He dwells most of his time in the clouds; a region to which no ordinary fellow could possibly follow him. However, it is as pleasant here as anywhere, so let us sit down and wait. I began to fancy I was destined never to see you again," he continued in a voice intended for Sybil's ear alone.

"What a terrible affliction! How could you endure such a thought?" she replied with a gleam of white teeth, and a coquettish toss of her pretty head.

"I could not endure it; hence am here, wandering like an uneasy ghost in the neighbourhood of my inamorata, and have found my reward when I least expected it!" His dark eyes were gazing passionately into the girl's light blue ones, and she replied nervously—

"I did not think you were capable of talking such

nonsense!"

"Nonsense! I mean every word. It is truest sense to me. You believe me? Say you do!"

But Sybil shook her head; a flirtation with this handsome young fellow "pour passer les temps" might be all very well, but as to genuine love-passages—for that

she did not feel prepared.

Yet, even while dimly thinking something of the kind, she was deliberately winding her meshes more closely round her willing victim. The girl's pose was one of studied grace; though not tall, her rounded, well-developed form had a certain voluptuous beauty. Against the dark green background of foliage, her golden head, with its heavy masses of fluffy hair, shone in striking contrast; every curve of her supple figure was accentuated, and its charm heightened by the clinging white muslin gown she wore, and a well arched foot in its white stocking and low shoe, was displayed beneath a dainty frill. Sybil Penmaur was playing with fire; not for the first time, it is true. But it is quite possible that her own peace, which has never yet been more than ruffled, may some day be suddenly broken—then she might, in her turn, suffer some of the pangs so ruthlessly inflicted on her victims.

Mabel Inglis turned away from the absorbed couple, feeling herself to be very evidently "de trop" and not at all relishing the situation.

And they immediately availed themselves of the opportunity to stroll beneath the overbending branches so temptingly near.

"I wonder whether Sybil knew they might possibly be passing?" she mused. "Certainly her cagerness to

come here to-night was rather marked. I shall be glad when her visit is at an end, if these rencontres are to be frequent. I am perfectly sure Mrs. Penmaur would not at all approve of them."

"Good evening, Miss Inglis," said Zed, presently approaching, and raising his hat. "You appear to have been deserted, as well as myself! I found the current so strong just here that the boat was a little difficult to secure. What has become of Bert?"

"Mr. Hocking is with my friend, Miss Penmaur," she replied.

They walked on in silence for some moments; Mabel quietly taking stock of her companion, whose strong manly face wore a troubled expression; at length with a slight effort, having apparently decided to take a course of action she felt to be called for, yet which might possibly be misunderstood, she said—

"Mr. Peardon, will you promise not to misjudge my motive, if I ask you a few pertinent questions?"

"You need not fear my doing that, Miss Inglis," was Zed's reply. "I will reply satisfactorily if I can."

How his reassuring smile illuminated the face she had thought somewhat hard! Why, it almost made him appear handsome.

"Thank you." She did not smile in return, but, with the colour mounting slowly in her sweet face, continued—

"What is the exact position Mr. Hocking occupies at the works? My father seldom mentions business at home, so I have no means of knowing."

"He is one of the clerks. A junior."

"And you? You are an engineer, I think?"

He bowed assent. In his proud humility Zed failed

to see what possible interest his affairs could have for his master's daughter.

Animated by this feeling, his verbal reply to the latter query was a puzzled and rather distant "Yes, and I ought to be at work now."

"I think Mr. Hocking has not been with the firm as long as you have?"

"No; he is a comparatively new importation."

"You have not much in common, I should gather, from the little I have seen of you both."

"Not much, it is true, but we were at school together, and coming from the same town creates a bond of interest, you see."

"I can quite understand that. One more question—she hesitated nervously—Has your friend any interest in the works besides his present situation?"

"Bert? No indeed! If either he or I ever attain to any position, beyond that of mere workmen, we shall have to be 'the architects of our own fortune.' For myself, I am glad it is so;" he continued, with a movement of his head, indicative of conscious power.

"I can so well understand that feeling!"

"You are scarcely likely to do so from experience," he laughed.

"I do not acknowledge that. There are higher, more worthy ambitions than those connected with the pursuit of money surely?"

"Certainly, yet money is a grand motive power."

"I grant it. Well used, its capacity for good is almost limitless, but, as far as I have seen, it is more frequently powerful for evil!"

"Yes, in a good many cases, I have known the fact of having just enough spoil fellows who, given an incentive to labour, might have made their mark. I don't think, I really don't think the possession of a

modest amount would enervate me," he continued reflectively.

"No, I should say it would not," Mabel assented.
"I wonder what has become of our companions?"
Zed presently observed. "It is growing dim. Bert has evidently forgotten our agreement to return at a certain time."

"And Papa will be getting curious as to the cause of our absence," thought Mabel. "Sybil is really a sillier girl than I fancied."

Presently a huge St. Bernard dog dashed out of a small wood behind them, and began jumping round Mabel with every canine expression of delight.

"What a splendid dog!" Zed exclaimed. "Is he

yours, Miss Inglis?"

"Yes; isn't he a grand fellow? Come here, Switzer. Where have you been roaming, I wonder? Not chasing those sheep again I hope? That is his great failing," she added, laying her hand lovingly on the dog's massive head; "if he can possibly get into a meadow where sheep are grazing, he sets the whole flock into a state of abject terror."

As Mabel talked, her anxiety and annoyance at the thoughtless conduct of her friend continued growing. especially as, on reaching the bank where she had last seen the pair, they were still invisible.

"How could Sybil act in so indiscreet a manner?" she wondered.

Bert might well be pardoned for imagining that, while pleasing himself, Zed must surely be pleased as well. For he well knew that the society of Miss Inglis was sought eagerly by many an ardent admirer; though that stately young lady possessed few attractions for himself. Certain it is that hitherto the apparent devotion of the many had received but scant

acknowledgment; she did not desire their attention; and no favoured individual had as yet penetrated to the inmost recesses of this true-hearted girl's sweet, pure nature. She had formed a very high ideal of what man, at his best, might become, and, alas, ordinary manhood fell far below her standard. Her belief in the possibilities of womanhood also was often rudely shaken. How small minded, and utterly frivolous in their aims many of her acquaintances showed themselves to be! Yet, if only girls would cultivate a higher tone, was it not possible that the chivalry of ancient days might be revived? Not, as then, that true knights might do battle with mortal foes to win their ladies favour, but, could they not be inspired to strike a firm lance against the powers of evil, so rampant on all sides? How she would enjoy—thought this enthusiastic nineteenth century maiden—animating and helping to arm her own true knight for the fray; bidding him an earnest God-speed, and the promise of a warm welcome when he returned victorious!

But she had not found such a cavalier yet! and was beginning to question in pessimistic moments, whether, except in books, there ever were, or had been, any grand and noble men, who were ready to struggle against odds for right and truth.

But this is a digression. To all outward seeming Mabel was cool, almost cold, in her greetings to each and all; usually occupied, and apparently content to be so, with ordinary every-day affairs.

"There they are," she presently exclaimed in a tone of decided relief. "Fetch them, Switz, old fellow."

Switz apparently had a preference for his present companions however, and made no move in the direction of the two young people; merely signifying by a wag of his bushy tail, that he had heard the command.

"Why, Mabel, where have you been?" queried Sybil, assuming the air of an aggrieved person. "I made sure you would follow us."

"Then, if you intended that, why not have left some clue behind? We should have done so most certainly, had it been possible. Papa will have gone to the drawing-room long since," she continued significantly, "we must certainly hasten now."

"Well you can't say I am delaying you." Turning towards Bert, she wished him a careless good-night, and walked away without vouchsafing a glance at his

companion.

"Good-night, Mr. Peardon, and thank you," said Mabel, holding out her hand; and with a bow in the direction of Bert, in which he was quick to read a certain amount of displeasure, she followed Sybil's retreating form.

"What has she got to thank you for, I wonder?" said Bert, looking after the girls with an ill-tempered scowl on his handsome face, which sadly marred its beauty.

"Nothing to my knowledge, but Miss Inglis possesses a degree of courtesy which appears to be strangely lacking in the composition of her friend! Don't ask me to come boating with you again, unless you specify the destination," he continued, in an annoyed tone, as they walked away. "What do you think Mr. Inglis would say, if he knew of this escapade?"

"I neither know nor care. Mr. Inglis is nothing to me."

"Nothing, but your present employer and source of income," said Zed dryly. "Don't be a fool, Bert,

and quarrel with your bread and butter. When and where did you contrive to become so intimate with that fair-haired doll? I had no idea that you had seen anything of our employer's household since the night we were all there."

"As if you were cognisant of all my movements! You are positively cheeky, Zed! As to speaking of my peerless Sybil in that strain—don't do it again in my hearing, that's all! Doll, indeed! where is your eye for beauty, I wonder? Yours must be a singularly narrow soul;" he said contemptuously.

"The young lady in question does not show herself to be a very wise beauty, anyhow. For myself, I have little admiration for any perfection which is so palpably

skin deep."

"No; because your mind is running on that vixenish hoyden, Zenobia Marsh," sneered his companion.

He was sorry he had said it the next moment however, for Bert was tinged with cowardice, and Zedekiah's expression of white indignation, as he hissed out—

"If I ever hear you even name that young lady again, Bert Hocking, you will regret having done so to your dying day. That speech was unworthy of any creature calling himself a man, let alone you, who have received so many kindnesses at the hands of Miss Marsh;" made him positively tremble with terror.

It was some moments before he ventured to say—"I didn't know you felt so strongly."

"Merely bear in mind that I mean every word I have said, as you will discover to your cost if you ever give me cause to show you of what mettle I am made," was the stern reply. "About your action to-night, however. You are clearly most to blame, for I daresay you have filled the young lady's head with a lot of untruths. Arranging clandestine meetings

with his daughter's friend is scarcely the right method of returning our employer's kindness in introducing us to his home."

"Introducing us to his home! You may have a kind of self-respect, Zed, but 'pon my word, it's a kind I never met before! I've no manner of patience with a mean spirit like that! Showing off his menagerie is more like the truth! Ugh! I can't understand any fellow possessing so little proper pride!"

"I've too much, I assure you," returned Zed quietly, "to force my company in any quarter where the intrusion might be construed into an impertinence. That has been the danger in to-night's escapade, and I will take care that, as far as I am concerned, it does not

occur again."

"Well for my part, I think one person is as good as another any day."

"That may be all very fine in theory, but it doesn't hold water; if you really believe it, go and chum with that poor tramp yonder; he is your brother, you know."

"I don't feel drawn towards him, anyhow, and I do

towards Miss Penmaur-very strongly."

"You—I was going to say, you idiot, Bert, for I declare you are acting like one! Do you really imagine that fashionable young lady thinks of you in any way save as a handsome fellow who knows how to flirt?"

"So I have one good point in your eyes, ch? You really do think me good-looking?"

"Oh yes;" Zed replied, laughing heartily, "and as vain as a peacock into the bargain. What are good looks without brains to back them, man? Bless me, I'd rather be the plainest man in England, if I could ensure my head-piece being decently furnished, than

possess the physical charms of an Apollo minus mental power."

"And I'd choose good looks, and risk the rest. Returning to our question, however. Who is to judge as to suitable companionship, I wonder?"

"One's own common sense should be the safest guide, I think. Anyhow, I mean to trust mine, and not

place myself in such a false position again."

"It seems to me that common sense pulls us in different directions; your's may be all right as far as you are concerned, mine speaks after another fashion."

"Well I am not your keeper, fortunately, but I warn you the tack you are on is a dangerous one, and if you persist in such an idiotic course of action, you'll find yourself in trouble some day, mark my words!"

"Gammon! I'll look after myself, trust me."

"Very well, see that you do. Pull ahead now. I don't mean to spend any more valuable time in giving unwelcome advice. As it is, I shall have to sit up into the small hours, thanks to your thoughtless action."

"More fool you, that's all I say. Who'll thank you for bothering so much about things?"

"I'm not doing it for the sake of thanks, so shall not be disappointed if I don't get them. My work is done quite as much for my own satisfaction as that of any other person. I'm not looking forward to remaining a workman all my life, you may be sure."

"Then you are ambitious after all? Well, work away; I may do as well as you without striving so hard, perhaps; who knows."

"Ah, who? Thank goodness here we are at last; that has been a stiff pull. Good-night."

"Good-night. I'll promise to be cautious," laughed

Bert, as he sauntered away; while Zed, breaking into a sharp run, was soon out of sight.

## CHAPTER XII.

#### TROUBLESOME SYBIL.

WHILE the two young men were rowing back to town, Mabel Inglis, after trying in vain to draw from her companion, who was decidedly sulky, a satisfactory account of her questionable conduct, said quietly—

"Very well then, Sybil, I must tell Papa what has occurred; there is no other course open to me. If you have no self-respect, we must, as long as you are with us, do our best to protect you against yourself."

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed Sybil passionately. "How dare you say that I am wanting in self-respect, simply because I am not so cold and strait-laced as yourself? What is there in my action to interest your wonderful Para, pray?"

"Do you think he would consider to-night's behaviour worthy of refined ladies?" queried Mabel, calmly ignoring the sneer.

"It is perfectly immaterial to me what Mr. Inglis thinks of anything I choose to do. Certainly it would be useless for me to attempt to attain the perfection of his immaculate daughter! I do just as I please at home, and mean to pursue the same course here."

"Is that quite true, Sybil? Mrs. Penmaur must be strangely altered if a flirtation between her daughter

and an ordinary clerk in a counting-house could be regarded with equanimity."

"An ordinary clerk, indeed! That shows how much

you know."

"Why, what do you think he is? I assure you my information is correct."

"And I beg to state that it is only partially so. Imagine looking into that handsome face and really believing it to belong to 'only a clerk!' Why, he is a very king among men, and might rise to, and adorn,

any position."

Mabel laughed. "Your opinions as to the attributes of kingship are very different to mine;" she declared, shaking her head emphatically. "Good looks are only a very unimportant item. You have not told me yet how you contrived to learn that he was likely to be in the neighbourhood. Do you think I would consciously have aided you to keep such a tryst?"

"Oh no, most certainly not, my immaculate friend. Therefore I was wise enough not to take you into my confidence. But, bless my heart, Mabel, do you seriously imagine that I care for the fellow?"

"If you do not, your action is even less pardonable than I thought;" said Mabel sternly; withdrawing the arm into which Sybil's own was linked. "Such conduct I cannot help considering not only wrong, but absolutely immoral. You are destroying in yourself, and in a fellow mortal, all the finest feelings with which God has endowed us. Why!—why, Sybil, do you realize it? You may be helping to destroy a human soul!"

"Good gracious, Mabel, how you rave! Do you never, under any conditions, enjoy a little flirtation, 'pour passer les temps?' just to keep your hand in? If not, I am sorry for you. Why, in this dead alive

place, one would go melancholy mad if they followed

your example!"

"Then the sooner you return home the better. Yes, Sybil, I mean it. I have no wish to become your jailor, but if you stay here, and continue to arrange clandestine meetings with young men like my father's clerk, or any others, I shall be compelled to assume that detestable office. So, if we are to remain even outwardly friends, the sooner you leave us, the better."

"Well—of all the rude speeches I have ever heard, that beats them all!"

"I know it sounds unpardonably rude, but it appears to me far kinder to speak out than be perpetually seething inwardly."

"Suppose I say I will not go just yet?"

"In that case I must do as I said," replied Mabel, slowly mounting the stairs to her own room. They had entered the house by the conservatory, which opened on the lawn, so gaining admittance to the hall by way of a pleasant morning room.

Sybil merely pouted; but as the two met presently at the drawing-room door, she whispered entreatingly—

"Don't tell tales, Mab. I'll be more discreet in

future-I will, really!"

"Very well," Mabel whispered back, "you keep your word, and I will keep mine."

"So here you are! Truants! I wonder what you mean by wandering out after dinner in this manner, instead of being at hand to entertain me! I shall be obliged to constitute some staid duenna a spy upon your actions, young ladies."

The speaker was a handsome, white haired old gentleman, resembling, both in appearance and dress,

the typical, old-fashioned country squire rather than a man of business.

"But it was so dreadfully hot indoors," said Sybil, pouting bewitchingly. "Have you been very, very lonely?" She leaned over his chair caressingly as she spoke.

"Lonely? Of course I have. But it is not of the slightest use for you to pretend any sorrow on that score. I know how hard a heart beats inside that

dainty gown. Am I not right?"

"No, indeed! I am sure it is a very tender one; not one bit hard," replied Sybil, shaking her head.

There could be no two opinions as to Sybil's prettiness; but unfortunately, that, after all, is worth very little, if there are no sterling qualities behind the

beauty.

"Mabel, my dear, you will find a paper in the pocket of my coat; bring it here. I want you to read an article it contains aloud. I feel sure the subject will interest us all, or, if not, it ought to;" observed Mr. Inglis, shaking his head with mock gravity in Sybil's direction.

"Is it this engineering article, Papa?"

"Yes."

"I thought it was 'bad form' to introduce 'shop' into the sanctity of home;" said Sybil in a whisper which she intended to be heard.

"You are an incorrigible puss. Why, you ought to feel extremely grateful for the anxiety I display that your ignorance may be enlightened!" Mr. Inglis exclaimed, smiling pleasantly as he spoke.

As Mabel commenced reading, Sybil, with a shrug of resignation, threw herself on the couch, and, clasping her small hands above her head, closed her eyes, with the intention-not of listening intelligently; oh no. What had railways, and the merits of rival engines to do with her?—but of arranging in her own mind some method by which she might continue to please herself, yet elude Mabel's notice, and blame. To this vain little puss, the whole end and aim of a girl's existence was to have as many flirtations on hand as possible. Where was the use of being pretty, if it was not right to let anyone tell you so? she argued. In this case, she was getting perilously near a warmer feeling than had yet stirred her shallow nature. Bert's handsome face haunted her to the exclusion of all others. What a pity he was not rich! Now if he and that stupid, plain John Wynn, at home, could change circumstances, I really don't think I would hesitate any longer, she mused reflectively.

Mabel meanwhile read on with growing interest. At length, putting down the paper, she exclaimed—

"Oh, Papa, what a difference it will make! Only, do you know, I think it is almost a pity."

"My dear! In what way?"

"Well, you see, as the country becomes more and more intersected by railways, it will have the effect of making all the people more alike, I fear. Do you not think so?"

"I am afraid there is not much danger of that; in the best sense, that is. Possibly some of the characteristics which have belonged to various localities will gradually disappear; for people will intermix more. I have two young fellows in my employ who come from the little town which will be most benefited—Dunheved. There could not possibly be greater contrasts. I often wish the one would take a leaf from the other's book."

Mabel coloured as he spoke, and Sybil suddenly sat upright, wide awake and attentive now.

"By the bye," Mr. Inglis continued quietly, "you met them, of course, when the employees were here that day. I remember calling Peardon in, and the other came with him"

"I remember them very well. Which do you prefer?"

"Oh, the tall fellow, Peardon, unquestionably. He has the making of a remarkably clever engineer in him, and appears to be blessed with that element of success, an unlimited supply of patience. His powers of application and concentration amount to positive genius."

"I also saw them," broke in Sybil; "and certainly preferred the other, myself."

"I daresay," said Mr. Inglis dryly. "Peardon does not strike one as a particularly attractive ladies' man. Hocking on the contrary, may possibly be able to pay them court, better than he can do anything else! Certainly his talents in the direction of usefulness have been hidden as yet."

"You are prejudiced against him, just because he happens to be handsome, poor fellow!"

"Handsome, is he? Well, there is no accounting for tastes. I must say that personally I admire the other much more."

"A great awkward fellow, who hardly knows how to shake hands properly-judging from appearances," she added hurriedly, in reply to a sharp glance from her host's keen eyes.

"I am going to bed," she remarked presently, interrupting an eager discussion between the father and daughter. "You two are far above poor little me, so I may as well secure some beauty sleep."

"Very well, child; good-night. Has the evening been dull for you? Never mind, to-morrow will make up for it, perhaps."

"I shall be up presently," called Mabel.

"If you are not very soon, don't disturb me;" was the response.

"What ails the child, Mabel? She does not appear

to be herself at all."

"Perhaps she is a little over-tired," replied Mabel evasively; "she finds us rather dull, I fear. We are just a trifle inclined to be content with our own society,

you know, Papa."

Mr. Inglis returned the look of affection his daughter gave him, thinking, as he glanced at her sweet, intelligent face, that it was not every man who had so much reason to be content with the companionship home afforded. Then, kissing her fondly, he said-

"Well, run away now; make her as happy as you can as long as she is our guest."

Running upstairs, Mabel found the door of her guest's room already locked when she turned the handle, and a sleepy voice called—

"I have kept my word, Mab, and gone to bed.

Good-night."

Responding brightly-"You will be ready for an early morning run then, won't you? Happy dreams:" she was very soon in bed and dreaming herself.

Meanwhile, after bidding Bert good-night at the landing stage, Zedekiah hurried rapidly to his own abode. It was at no great distance from the works, and the room he had chosen was at the top of the house; he preferred it because, though the window was small, it commanded a prospect of woodland and water unseen from those in the lower stories. Here we find him, when the nearest church clock is booming

forth the hour of midnight; still poring over books and papers, making occasional rapid notes; as much absorbed as though the hour were early morning, and he had enjoyed a long night's repose.

Though his room is small, and at present littered with papers, there is an appearance of homely comfort about it which bachelor quarters do not always possess. This result is owing in great part to a recent action of our hero's. He was hastening home one night from the works at a very late hour, having been detained by some mishap to one of the machines which must be rectified before morning, and took the shortest cut, which led him past some miserable slums. It was a very dark night, and, just here, lamps were not too plentiful. In about the darkest part a sound, as of a woman sobbing violently, startled him. Listening intently, it came again. Making for the direction whence the sound proceeded, he discovered, crouched on the ground against a high blank wall, a slight girlish figure. Her form swayed back and forward as she wept unrestrainedly, in the very abandonment of grief; apparently neither knowing or caring whether anyone was near.

At first she would vouchsafe no replies to his questions; merely shaking off the hand he laid on her shoulder with an impatient movement. But, little by little, he gathered that her parents were both dead, and the people with whom she had since lived having quarreled to-night, had turned her out to "fend" for herself, and she knew not where to seek shelter.

"Poor child," said Zed, in a sympathizing tone. "Well, you can't stay here, that's quite certain. Walk on with me while I think what to do, will you?"

She had ceased crying now, and after a moment slowly rose, and stood hesitating at his side.

"Don't be afraid," said Zed, reassuringly. "You may trust me. Come along, I have it!"

Reaching his lodgings he bade the girl wait for his reappearance.

"You will not go away, will you?" he asked. "I

shall be sure to come out again presently."

"No, I'll not budge; not if I knows it."

His old landlady was more than astonished when her usually absorbed lodger hurriedly entered the kitchen, exclaiming—

"I say, Mrs. Hoare, there is such a wretched looking girl outside. Would you very much mind letting her eat some of my supper in here? She declares she has nowhere to go for shelter."

"Eh! That's a queer tale, if so be she's a decent chield. Where did you manage to come across sich a one, I wonder? She looked keenly at him over the rim of her glasses.

"On the road home. I heard somebody in trouble,

so stopped to speak. May I fetch her in?"

"Ay, I s'pose you must," she responded slowly. "If I was to say 'no' you'd think me main hard-hearted, I daresay; but there, after all, I've been in the world a good while longer than you, young man, and know summat of its wickedness too; I do that. But—"

Not waiting to hear more, Zed rushed away, reappearing "before she could draw breath" Mrs. Hoare said afterwards, with the most miserably starved looking specimen of girlhood at his heels whom she had ever seen.

Before long the girl was not only fed, but arrangements were made for her remaining, at least

for the present, to assist the old landlady in her rough work.

"You shan't lose by your kindness, Mrs. Hoare," said Zed gratefully. "I'll help to pay her, and I'm sure you need a little assistance badly; don't you now?"

"Tut, tut; who wants you to pay the maid, I'd like to know? I can manage the bit o' wages her'll be worth yet awhile, or it's a pity for me! But there, go your ways, for a kind-hearted lad as you are, after all's said and done."

However, Sal persisted in considering Mr. Peardon the important factor in bringing about her improved condition, and was so grateful, that at every spare moment during the busy days she continually hovered round his room; trying to show, by the attention she bestowed on it, the depth of her gratitude. Certainly his few wants had never been so pleasantly anticipated before, even though she did sometimes bungle ludicrously in her ideas as to what constitutes comfort,

It is chiming the half hour before he at length starts to his feet, and stretching his arms out with a yawn, exclaims triumphantly—

"There! Never say die! I believe I've succeeded at last. Hurrah! If so, I shall be a step nearer realizing my ambition. It's slow work, but then isn't the goal worth any effort, that's all? I wonder now, I do wonder whether she ever thinks of me? It's a fact, though she little knows it, I never for one moment forget her, my beautiful queenly guide. That is just what she is—my loadstar. Eh, ho; love takes queer turns with different folk. I s'pose Bert Hocking fancies he's in love with yonder pretty plaything.

Why she's no more fit to compare with the girl I love, than chalk's like cheese!

"I wonder whether Bert ever will make anything out? Poor fellow, I'm sorry for him, with all his good looks. I'd rather have my heritage of conscious power and the will to plod on, than any of his gentleman blood, with its stain of shame, and leaning to deceit and laziness."

As soon as Zedekiah knew that Mr. Inglis had arrived on the following day, he sought his office, saying quietly—

"Might I have a word with you, sir?"

"Is that you, Peardon? Yes, come in, come in. What is it?"

"I think I have discovered the defect in that action which has been puzzling us so much, sir."

"Eh? Do you really think so? Come, what is it then, and where?"

"I could show you better in my room, sir, if you would not mind coming up for a few moments."

"Very well. I'll be there directly. These letters must be attended to at once. I hope you are right. If so, it will make a considerable difference in taking that contract for the railway."

Mr. Inglis was not long in following Zedekiah upstairs, and eagerly listened to the explanation his engineer gave of the method by which the faulty action could be cured, and the machine in question be materially improved in other ways, with little, if any, addition of cost.

"I believe you are right," he exclaimed at length, emphatically. "We must get it tried experimentally as speedily as possible, and if it answers, as it should do, take out a patent at once. You shall be a sharer of

any benefit which accrues from your discovery, Peardon; that is only fair."

"Thank you, sir. It will take a little time perfecting the model. I may give myself entirely to it, I suppose?"

"Certainly, certainly. Command any assistance you

need as well."

Mr. Inglis rubbed his hands together delightedly as he turned to leave the room. This defective action had caused no end of bother, and threatened to wreck the immediate business of the firm, which, being of long-standing and hitherto, first in the field, in its own especial line, had recently found competitors treading close on its heels, boasting of more modern improvements. If Zedekiah was right, its prestige would be not only restored, but placed on a firmer basis than ever. No wonder his employer was pleased!

"By the bye, Peardon; come up to my place this evening, will you? The young people have some friends, but we can talk this matter over more in detail in the quiet of my library. Come to dinner; seven prompt."

"You are kind, sir; but if I might put in an

appearance later I would prefer it."

"Very well, just as you like—just as you like."

"Zed Peardon and the governor seem uncommonly thick," remarked Bert enviously to a fellow clerk. "I wonder what's up now?"

"Oh, some machinery do, you bet. There's a hitch somewhere, one of the foremen told me so yesterday."

"That's why he is so tremendously absent-minded then, I suppose. He'll hardly reply to a civil question. He's as proud as lucifer, too!" "Proud? What's he got to be proud of, I wonder? He's just a workman. Now I should say, it's you that's proud."

"I? Rubbish. I do think I could do the gentleman better than my esteemed friend, though., He seems positively more awkward than ever with ladies. Now when I am with them, I feel just in my element," returned Bert, twirling his moustache affectedly.

"So I should imagine, if only they happen to be frivolous and empty headed enough!"

It was Mr. Inglis who spoke. He had entered the office, unnoticed by the two young men, and with a gesture of utter scorn, continued sternly—

"However, neither of you are likely to be favoured with ladies' society here, so I would advise you to attend to your duties, or you may find a difficulty in procuring the necessaries of life, leaving such luxuries as the society of ladies entirely out of the question."

"Confound him, he's always where he isn't wanted," muttered Bert, with a scowl, as his employer walked away.

"We were fairly caught, anyhow!" laughed his companion, with a shrug.



## CHAPTER XIII.

#### A MOST UNTOWARD ACCIDENT.

IT is a glorious evening just a year later, and on one of the shadiest paths which are to be found on the Castle slope, Violet Tremaine has been sitting for some time absorbed in earnest and confidential talk, with her friend Zenobia.

The day has been oppressively hot, but as the evening shadows lengthened, a pleasantly refreshing breeze has sprung up.

"I wonder why affairs which are really of vital importance only to one's self, should stir the interest of outsiders so much?"

Violet spoke impatiently, and a frown contracted her usually smooth forchead, a puzzled, as well as an angry one.

"In your case, dear, I think the doctor is right. He is a loving father, and is only eager to secure your real happiness; of that I am confident."

"Why should not the same be true for you, Zennie? Mr. Marsh loves you I suppose? But there," as an expression of pain crossed Zenobia's sweet face, and her sensitive lips quivered; "I am a brute; forgive me, dear. Only, what special fault has Will, that he should be singled out as so unworthy of confidence?"

"If only he gave Doctor Tremaine the smallest reason for trust, I believe he would win it. Why should he insist so emphatically that your engagement must be kept secret? I wonder you do not resent it yourself, Vi!"

"Shall I confess that I do sometimes? But when

he talks to me, all the resentment goes. Poor fellow, it would be strange evidence of love on my part if I made mischief between him and his father."

"But his father will have to be told."

"Maybe, I don't know. Sometimes I think it will end first, but — Oh, never mind my affairs, what an unfortunate pair of girls we are! Has Mr. Penmaur gone?"

"Yes, for the time at least. I wish, oh how I wish he would remain away altogether. It is very difficult

not to hate him."

"Poor old girl. You might do worse though, after all, judging from appearances;" Violet added reflectively. "What a pity it seems that you cannot like him."

"You are all against me, even Lyddy has gone over to the enemy!"

"We shall have you promising to marry him after

all some day!"

"Never! Never will I give my hand, where my heart does not go without wavering in the slightest. No, love is, and shall be, "lord of all" with me."

"So intimate acquaintance has not improved matters?"

"No indeed. I used to have a kind of respect for Mr. Penmaur, but even that has gone now."

"Why, how has he contrived to forfeit that I wonder?"

"By pandering, as he does, to my poor father's weaknesses. I do not think any real principle underlies his actions, it is all a matter of policy."

Violet laughed. "He is acting on the motto of 'All is fair in love and war' evidently," she said, "why—"

A scream from Daisy, who, with her brother

Sep was playing near, caused the two girls to spring quickly towards a little copse from which the sound proceeded.

"Where are you, Daisy. What is the matter?"

"Oh, Vi!" sobbed the child, running towards her, "Sep's up there, and he can't get down!"

"Up where?"

"There."

She pointed, as she spoke, to a narrow ledge at a great height above them, just beneath it the boy was clinging with both hands, to the branches of an overhanging tree, having lost his footing, and was apparently in great danger of losing his head as well.

After looking at him for one breathless moment in horrified speechlessness, Zenobia darted away saying—

"Stay there, Vi. I see how he can be rescued I think. Hold on Sep," she called, running rapidly round the turn, and darting fleetly up the rough flight of steps, leading to a path above the point where the boy hung.

A few moments later Violet saw her tall figure

cautiously descending the precipitous slope.

It was a dangerous undertaking, exceedingly dangerous; Violet shivered as she watched, and strove to inspire her brother with the endurance necessary to hold on.

Very cautiously Zenobia proceeded, until presently she stood just over the boy, on a ledge somewhat broader than often occurred. Then, clasping with one hand a branch near, and planting her feet firmly she stooped towards him, saying quietly—

"Now, Sep, loose one hand and clasp mine. Take firm hold; now move nearer, and try to find foothold. Right?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Yes."

"Now then, jump."

How did it happen? Scarcely a moment later, Sep was standing horrified on the ledge alone, and his preserver lay, a senseless heap, at his sister's feet below; while he gazed down with fascinated eyes, and so paralized with terror as to be unable to move.

For one instant Violet remained as though rooted to the spot; the next she rushed into the more frequented path, wildly seeking aid, while her young brother, clambering upward, presently descended the steps at headlong speed, guiding a stranger whom he had encountered, to the scene of the accident.

"She's just in here," he cried, with a sob. "There's Vi, oh, what shall we do?"

After one glance at the prostrate girl, the stranger acted very queerly,—for a stranger. Kneeling at her side, and taking one limp hand in his he said quickly and sternly—

"One of you run to the lodge, and the other go down into the green, bring help of some sort at once. Please be quick."

Sep, still pale and trembling, instantly sped away, but Violet lingered to loosen her friend's collar.

"Please do as I ask," said the gentleman impatiently, "No time should be lost," so she followed her brother.

Daisy, poor little frightened maiden, was sitting a short distance away crying bitterly, entirely forgotten by her terrified brother and sister; assuring himself, by a glance, that he was being obeyed, the stranger, taking the girl's beautiful head in his arms, murmured passionately—

"Oh, my darling, my queen, God grant that you are

not seriously injured. To think I should come home to this, after all my bright dreams!"

There was a sob in his voice, and, as he reverently chased her hands, from which he had gently withdrawn the gloves, watching anxiously the while for any sign of returning life, tears fell from the strong man's eyes.

Little Daisy raised her head from the bed of ivy, in which she had buried her tear-stained face, and

slowly came forward, saying in great surprise-

"Does you know my Vi's Zennie?"

"Yes, I know Miss Marsh. Are you Miss Tremaine's sister then?"

"Yes, I is Vi's Daisy. Oh look! look! Zennie is waking up! Is you better now, dear?" she continued kneeling at the girl's side, and stroking her white face. "You did frighten Daisy dreadful."

Zenobia smiled faintly in reply, then, noticing that a strange face was bending over her as well, attempted to rise. Stay, was he a stranger though?

As she moved he quickly raised his hat, saying with

a pleasant smile-

"Keep still, please, help will be here presently.

Don't try to move."

"Why—is it—Zed?" she questioned faintly, obeying him at once, "I fell, I remember, but how did you get here? Is Sep all right?"

"Yes, quite, Miss Marsh, and I am Zed. Here comes some one at last. Now then how shall we move

you?" "Let me try to walk."

"Gently then."

But alas, movement of any kind was evidently impossible, as she tried to rise by his aid, she sank back again with a groan, and lapsed into unconsciousness once more.

"I must carry her, at least to the gate," decided Zed. "There is nothing else for it. Will you run across to the stables, Miss Tremaine? We must get her home somehow, as quickly as possible."

Sadly the little procession started, the old gate keeper, who was the only man Violet had been able

to discover, hobbling and muttering in the rear.

"Drat it all," he ejaculated. "What ails the maids, that they must go climbing about, for all the world as if they was mazed? They'm always doing summat aggravating, darn me if they baint. I'd like to lock the gate upon all sich, I would that, drat the baggages!"

"Thank God," exclaimed Violet presently, as the outer gate was reached, "here is father. Sep must

have met him."

"Bless my soul! How on earth did this happen?" exclaimed the doctor, hurrying forward. "Sep has been telling me some unintelligible wild goose tale. Why,—why—good gracious me, where did you spring from, Peardon? Here lay her down, there is no one about fortunately. Has she been conscious at all since she fell?"

"Yes, for a moment only."

"Sep, run over to Hillman's. Tell him I want his easiest landau. Don't waste a minute."

There was little need for the injunction, Sep being only too conscious that the blame of this untoward occurrence rested solely with himself.

While the doctor made a cursory examination of the still unconscious girl, Violet gave him a rapid outline of how the catastrophe had occurred.

"Confound that young rascal," he muttered, "he will be the means of breaking somebody's neck someday, if his own does not get done for first. I'd give my right hand, that this had not happened. Here Peardon, you are younger than I, she must on no account lie here longer. Thank goodness there's the trap. Now girls run home and send Wetherall on with my instrument case, there is no knowing what I may need. As for you Sep, I must contrive in some way to make it impossible for you to continue this course of endangering the lives of other people as well as your own."

Though Zedekiah's heart was torn with grief, as he supported the head of the unconscious girl on his broad shoulder, yet his feeling was not entirely a sad one; with the sorrow, mingled thankfulness, that his hand had been the one to help. Such close contact with the girl he had loved so truly and so long, without feeling himself at liberty to make a sign, set his pulses beating rapturously.

The doctor held her hand, and studied the white face anxiously as they slowly proceeded, once or twice Zenobia groaned slightly, but gave no other sign of life. When at length the carriage stopped he descended, saying—

"I will get the door open. Can you manage to bring her up the steps without aid?"

"Yes, easily."

"Lawks a massy. Whativer hev 'ce been adoin' now, I wonder? Who's been trying to murder my chield, eh? They've come terrible nigh doing it too, seemeth to me!" cried Lyddy; raising her hands in horrified amazement, on opening the door.

"Nay, Lyddy, it's not so bad as that, I hope. I fancy we will soon bring her round when she is in bed. Lead the way, will you?"

"Well!—How to goodness!—what next, I wonder? I declare if tisn't that Zed come back!" she muttered,

while hurrying upstairs, and assisting gently to lay the passive form on her white bed.

"Eh dear, eh dear, my blessed chield, troubles never seem coming to an end in this house," she wailed. "There, though, I might ha known as how summat was goin' to happen. I did hev sich a queer dream last night, and have felt that miserable and whist all day."

While Lyddy talked she was by no means idle. Nodding towards the door she gave Zed a peremptory dismissal, and then proceeded to gently undress her charge, ably assisted by the anxious doctor, while slow tears coursed each other down her thin cheeks.

For a long time the girl continued unconscious, but at length, after the means at hand had been persistently tried, a gentle sigh gave signs of returning animation.

"Her's coming to, thanks be to God, that her be!" Lyddy exclaimed.

Opening her eyes Zenobia, looking round, questioned wonderingly.

"Why, is that you, Doctor? How did I get here? I fell, did'nt I?"

"Fell! I should think so! The next time any reckless boy goes clambering up precipices, don't you rush to the rescue, young lady! Can you tell me where you are injured?"

"My back feels very strange; and so does my head."

"Humph! Well I will try not to hurt you; but I must make an examination. Lyddy, just stand there, will you? that's right, now then."

Each movement was torture, but Zenobia did not again lose consciousness.

It was an hour later when, having rendered his

patient as comfortable as possible, Dr. Tremaine descending the stairs found Zedekiah Peardon still waiting in the passage.

"What is the injury, doctor?" he asked, anxiously, "nothing very serious, I hope?"

"I trust not, my lad, a nasty sprain. A very nasty sprain. The danger that concussion of the brain may supervene, is the worst we have to fear. Her temperament is fortunately such a calm one in a crisis, that I trust we shall be able to avert that however. If you have nothing better to do walk home with me, will you?"

No matter how important his engagements might have been, at such an invitation Zed would probably have found himself at liberty. Who would be more willing to listen to the hopes nearest his heart than the genial doctor? Nay, did he not already almost know them?

"Well so you are approaching a finish I suppose? When did you come?" Dr. Tremaine questioned.

"Only last night. Yes, we shall be all complete by the specified time I hope. It has been hard work this last two months and will be to the end now."

"And afterwards? You have good hopes of a substantial rise I trust?"

"Yes I think Mr. Inglis intends improving my position very materially. Indeed he has hinted as much."

"I am glad to hear it; very glad. By the bye, what has become of that young Hocking?"

"I have no idea where he lives now. If he is still in Plymouth I never come across him. Poor lad he acted like the most arrant fool and spoilt all his chances," "An affair with a lady wasn't it? We did'nt get any very clear account."

"Yes, a Miss Penmaur. She was visiting with Miss Inglis. We met her when the employees were all entertained at the hall one evening. I suppose the pretty doll was attracted by Bert's handsome face, anyhow she allowed him to flirt with her outrageously. Unfortunately for himself, he took it more seriously, and thought she would be quite ready to fly with him to some impossible eldorado! She was hardly the girl I fancy to be content with love in a cottage, even the daintiest, and anything more than a couple of rooms in a decent neighbourhood would have seriously taxed Bert's resources. Fortunately the affair was discovered, and put an end to in time; or there is no telling, they might have been starving together now!"

"Penmaur, did you say her name was?"

"Yes, Sybil Penmaur."

"What a singular coincidence!"

" How?"

But the doctor would say no more. Instead, he sank into such a regular brown study, that Zed, finding it impossible to extract any information from him, on the subject nearest his heart, bade him a disappointed "Good-night" at the gate.

His old grandmother had died during the first year of his absence, so his home coming was rather a lonely one. Yet, with what eagerness he had anticipated the pleasure of being once more in the neighbourhood of the girl he loved!

"Bless my soul," ejaculated the doctor, as, after bidding Zed good-night, he turned into his garden, instead of at once entering the house. "Can it possibly be that

fellow's sister I wonder? It might of course; though I understood this girl to be very young."

"If it should prove so, it will be one of the queerest things I ever came across!"

# CHAPTER XIV.

### SOMETHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR.

WHEN Zed, as soon as his numerous duties would allow him, appeared at the back door early the following day, he was greeted by Lydia with the exclamation—

"Ay, so it's thee, is it? Come in, come in now do 'ee. I'm main glad to see 'ee, I be that. Now sit ye down a bit, and tell me summat about yourself. Sakes alive, though, seemeth to me you'm getting to be a bit of a fine gentleman. Who'd a thought it now, ch?"

"It's very kind of you to be so interested in my doings, Lyddy," was Zed's reply, as he took the offered seat. "I called to know how Miss Marsh is this

morning."

"Mending, I hope; mending nicely. A mighty good thing too, for her fine gentleman lover be a coming to-morrow."

Zed started visibly, and his heart gave a painful

bound.

"Her lover? Who is he?" he questioned.

"Oh, a regular swell from down Cornwall. The master is fine set up with him; no mistake about that."

"And Miss Marsh?" Zed strove hard to speak in an unconcerned tone; he had no wish to pose as wearing the willow in the eyes of this keen old woman. There was not much likelihood of this occurring though; for, while he had been steadily winning for himself a name and position, which would enable him, without appearing wildly impertinent, to ask even Zenobia, who was in his eyes the queen of all women, to share them; here at least, he was still looked on as the ex-charity pupil, and would certainly never be credited with harbouring such an ambitious dream.

"Oh, well, I hardly know. Her's coy, you see. But, lawks-a-massy, money goes a main long way with most of 'um, after all's said and done. He seems to have plenty to do what he likes with, so there's no telling. You'm getting on fine, folks tell me."

"Yes, pretty fair. I am glad to hear such a good report of Miss Marsh, but I must'nt hinder you any longer, must I? Good-day."

"Bless us, man! Bide a bit, now do 'ee."

Zed had vanished, however; and shrugging her shoulders, Lydia turned slowly to go upstairs, saying—

"The lad's as queer as ever. He always was different fro' other folks."

As Zedekiah neared the gate some one entered, and he stood back to let them pass, thinking at first it was another caller; but,—could that greyhaired, bent old man possibly be his imperious old master? Yes, so it was!

Hearing a step, Mr. Marsh raised his head, and after contemplating the young man for a moment, said slowly—

"Am I mistaken, or are you my old pupil, Peardon?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Then it is you whom I have to thank for bringing

iny daughter home last evening?"

"I helped to do so, certainly. Miss Marsh is progressing better than doctor Tremaine feared would be the case, I am told!"

"So I suppose. How was the mischief done, I wonder? I was not at home last night until late, and have

as yet heard few particulars."

"Miss Marsh lost her footing I gathered, after rescuing her friend's brother from a position of peril. The ground appears to have given way under their double weight."

"It is most unfortunate. Why couldn't she let the lad alone? He would have been all right, trust

him."

Mr. Marsh spoke impatiently, and his forehead contracted into a frown, as he passed Zed with a distant nod, and, entering, closed the door noisily.

As the young man walked away, his thoughts recurred again to the words Lydia had let fall. Could it be possible that a lover, and a favoured one, was about after all to give a deathblow to his own high hopes? Hopes so deeply rooted in his nature, that to give them up, and feel that they never could be realized, seemed utterly impossible. "Yet," he thought sadly, "it well might be. Who could help loving Zenobia who knew her at all? And, if her lover was rich, was she not capable of adorning any position? Pure and sweet, and lovely as a dream. Why should I have made so sure all along that she was free?" he thought in self-scorn. "Other men have eyes as well as me; and she is even more beautiful than memory said. I don't fancy she is particularly happy though."

However, though he might be miserable, there were

duties to be done, and it was quite certain that their fulfilment precluded all possibility of brooding over his disappointment just now; so, pulling himself together he hurried away, becoming, for the next few hours, so absorbed as to be only partially conscious of his underlying misery.

Before the day was over he came to the conclusion also that Lyddy might possibly be mistaken; he would not so readily take things for granted.

"Fortunately," he mused, "I shall be hereabout for some time, and surely some way will open by which I can discover the real truth. If she loves this man, whoever he may be, why, then I must be content to see her happy, and not mind for myself."

He was striding rapidly back to the town after a visit of inspection to the cutting some three miles distant, when a burly farmer hailed him, stopping his dogcart suddenly.

"Here," he called, "jump up. You've been down to the new bridge, I s'pose; well, how's it going on now? How do things look altogether, eh?"

"Oh, we are getting on capitally on the whole. If only the weather doesn't break before we can make that bridge secure. That last flood delayed us provokingly."

"So I heard. Old Tamar knows how to kick up a shindy once in a while, as well as grander streams. I've seen more than one bridge washed away in my time, I can tell you. So you'm getting on first-class I hear, over to Plymouth. It's well to be you. Some folks have a knack of falling on their feet, eh?"

"Do you think I have done so, Mr. Reed? Well, perhaps, I have nothing to complain of certainly, but

plenty of hard work comes in my way, I assure you."

"Eh, I daresay; there's nothing gotten without work now-a-days.—That's true enough."

"And always has been more or less true, I expect."

"Have you been to see the old master yet?"

" I saw him this morning."

"Don't you notice a great change in him?"

"I do that! He has aged wonderfully."

"There's nothing worse than an accusing conscience to age a man;" said Mr. Reed sententiously, shaking his head

"Why, what has Mr. Marsh had to suffer on that score?"

"I should have thought you'd not much need to ask that question, from all accounts."

"Oh, well, he had an awfully bad temper, I know; and a hot-tempered man should never think of being a schoolmaster. But temper is not looked on as a crying sin, is it? More's the pity sometimes, I used to think."

"It leads to sin mighty often, though. Specially when drink comes in to make the way easier."

"You refer to some especial circumstance, of course. May I ask what it is?"

"You remember his wife, I suppose?"

"Remember Mrs. Marsh? I should think I do! Never a kinder, sweeter lady lived."

"Well, was she particular happy, do you think?"

"I never heard her say she wasn't." Zed spoke guardedly. What could the farmer be driving at?

"Well it's not for me to say how much truth there is in the story," continued the latter presently,

with slow emphasis; "but folks do say as how he were not particularly innocent of her death."

"Oh that must be mere rumour, and a cruel one. He loved her better than any living creature, I am sure of that."

"Well, that's the tale anyhow, as I heard it. And I'm bound to say he acts as if it were true."

"In what way?"

"Oh in more ways than one, by a long chalk. He used to be a genial, free-spoken man enough in company; now he's got never a word to say, and can't meet your eyes, was it ever so."

"But grief for her loss may account for all that!"

"Think so? He's trying now to harry that pretty maid of his into a marriage whether her will or no, I'm hearing."

"So;" thought Zed, and his heart lightened at a bound; "my darling is no consenting party? Then I'll not fear; she is far too true-hearted to contract a loveless marriage, no matter what pressure may be brought to bear."

"I have heard something of a lover before," he said aloud. "What sort of a man is he?"

"Oh, a regular swell, who wants to appear a long chalk younger than he really is."

"Well, Mr. Reed," said Zed, after a moment's silence; "I don't fancy there's much truth in that story about Mrs. Marsh, myself. That her husband is dull and gloomy I don't wonder; he may be remorseful too, because she, as well as the rest, suffered from his bad temper, and was less able to bear it. But that he would deliberately do her an injury I cannot believe. However, I must bid you good-night now; this is my shortest cut, and I have

something to go by to-night's post. Thanks for the lift."

"Don't mention it," said the jovial farmer heartily; "I shall hope to see something more of you before you leave us again."

Doctor Tremaine was very much relieved to find, on paying an early visit that morning, that his patient had passed a comparatively calm night, and was decidedly better than he had expected she would be.

"Come, come, our mishap is not going to turn out a tragedy after all," he, exclaimed, rubbing his hands delightedly. "We shall have you about again pretty soon, I hope. Wherefore that solemn expression? This is not an unmitigated evil, is it?"

"I dare not think so, Doctor. Especially as it has come just now."

"Why 'now,' especially?"

"Because it will help me out of a difficulty."

She flushed painfully, and turned her clear blue eyes on his face, with an expression in them it made his heart ache to meet. That of a lonely suffering nature, longing for sympathy and help, yet not knowing how or where to seek it.

Seating himself nearer his patient, the kindly doctor said—

"What is the trouble, my dear? Something is worrying you, evidently. Fancy yourself one of my own daughters for a time,—you are almost as dear to me as they are—and let me be Father Confessor for once, will you? It is often necessary for a doctor to understand mental, as well as physical ailments, before he can prescribe a cure, you know."

"It would hardly be the first time I confided in you, I think;" she replied, smiling faintly.

"Nor the last, I hope, until you give some fortunate fellow the exclusive right to your confidences."
"I do not want to do that, Doctor. If I did—I—"

she paused again, irresolutely; adding in a different tone presently - "Mr. Penmaur is coming back to-morrow."

"The dickens he is! And you would rather he

stayed away, I suppose?"

"Indeed I would! I do not, and never can, like him. There seems absolutely no foundation on which to trust."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, Doctor, how can you ask? It is not easy to explain a feeling, and yet—Now do you admire him yourself? Would you be inclined to trust his judgment on important matters?"

"Well, my dear," he replied slowly, "I acknowledge

that, on closer acquaintance, the man does appear to me somewhat deficient in moral backbone."

"That is just what I mean. I don't think he ever does anything, ever thinks of doing anything even, because it is right; only from expediency. Oh dear, I wish, how I wish he would only stay away."

"Cannot you tell him so?"

"How can I? He does not give me an opportunity. Besides, it is my father he professes to visit. Listen! There father comes."

"Good-morning, Tremaine," said Mr. Marsh, as he opened the door. "Lydia told me you were here. How long are you going to keep this girl upstairs, eh? Things are not so bad as at first appeared, I am told. That young rascal of yours had better keep out of my way for a time, nevertheless."

"Sep is in great trouble, I assure you. I think there is small likelihood of his forgetting this lesson."

'Poor little fellow; after all he was not so much to blame," said Zenobia. "I can't think how I contrived to slip."

"I daresay one was as bad as the other;" broke in Mr. Marsh impatiently. "I found out long ago that you could be fool-hardy enough on occasion. But"—turning to the doctor—"I have had no answer as yet. How long will it be before she is about again?"

"I was going to suggest, that a couch should be brought in here, and placed inside the window; she might have a change to-morrow if all goes well by lying on that for an hour or two, but nothing further must be attempted; this week at any rate."

"Confound it all! What am I to do, pray, with a visitor in the house?"

"A visitor, eh? That is unfortunate, I grant. But it cannot be helped. Rest and quiet are absolutely necessary, I assure you. Though better than I expected to find her, the shock to the nervous system from such a fall has been, of course, considerable. We have no business chattering here. You are turning faint I see young lady. What has become of Lydia, Marsh?"

"She is downstairs, I suppose."

"She must bring this girl something at once.—If you are at liberty I should like a few words with you. Good-morning, Zennie; remember there must be no attempt at getting up until I have seen you again. Lyddy," he called, descending the stairs rapidly; "beat up an egg in a glass of new milk, and carry it upstairs at once, will you? Do you hear?"

"Iss, fey, I hear; of course I do! Who's to help

hearing when you go bawling about the house-place like that?"

"Very well, be sure you take it up at once, and see that she drinks it; and don't let her fret," he continued more softly, as Lydia, with an annoyed face, and arms bare to the elbow, opened the kitchen door.

"Fret? What's her got to fret about, I'd like to know? What fancies have 'ee got in your head now, I wonder?"

"Are they fancies? Do you think that bonnie charge of yours is as happy as she might be just at present? I don't."

"Bless us an' save us, now what be 'ee talking about? There though, you never could talk sense for ten minutes together, was it ever so!" and Lyddy flounced away in high dudgeon, muttering to herself—"He's been meddling, sure as fate. Why can't he mind his own business, and leave other folks to manage theirs?"

Mr. Marsh was striding impatiently up and down the gravelled path in front of the house, when the doctor rejoined him, and having apparently made up his mind to some course of action, stopped short as he approached, saying—

"Here Tremaine, let us come to an understanding; I have a particular reason, a *very* particular reason, for being annoyed at this untoward occurrence."

"And that reason is-?"

"The advent of to-morrow's guest. Mr. Penmaur honours me by wishing to woo my daughter."

" Indeed!"

"How is he to succeed, if she remains shut up in her bedroom, I'd like to know?"

"So that's how the land lies, is it? And you are

quite willing to contemplate parting with her to an utter stranger?"

"I am willing to encourage anyone who appears likely to make the girl happy. What do you mean by calling him a stranger? I've known him for more than a year, as none is better aware than vourself."

"And you think Mr. Penmaur is calculated to make Zenobia happy?"

"What is there to prevent it? He loves her; of that there can be no manner of doubt."

"And Zenobia?"

"Well it would hardly be the thing, now would it? for a modest girl to show evidence of unsolicited affection. A girl's heart is generally pretty easily won, however"

"Is it? Not always, I fancy, if it is really worth the trouble of winning. However, should she object you will not try to drive her, I hope?"

"Bless my soul! Why on earth are you talking in that strain? I shall try my best to make her see things with my eyes, if she has none of her own, of that you may be sure."

"Why are you so much in earnest?"

"Who but a fool would not be in earnest? Here is a chance for Zenobia, who is simply buried in this poky place, to marry position, money, and love; the three great desiderata for which all women long, are they not? What on earth could the most fastidious of them desire more?"

"Well, girls are peculiar sometimes, and I repeat, if she should raise any objection, not apparent to yourself. don't attempt to drive her. Remember, the girl has no mother"

"And her father is not much of a guide, you are

thinking, I suppose? Very well, good-morning. I know my own affairs best, and propose managing them in my own way. I would thank you not to interfere by any mistaken sympathy, Tremaine."

"Now I have injured instead of helped that poor child's cause, I sadly fear;" mused the doctor as he walked away. "What a blundering idiot a man always

proves in affairs of this kind!"

"Why father, what a long time you have been! Is Zenobia worse, or why have you stayed so long with her?"

"What are you doing here, Violet? Zennie is better, but if you were going to her I would rather you did not; she is resting now."

"I thought you would have left long since. It is not

as serious as you feared last night, then?"

"No; there will be no permanent injury of any kind, I hope. But she must rest and take it quietly for some time."

"When may I see her?"

"Go in for an hour after dinner, if mother can spare you. She will be glad of someone to chat with then, I have no doubt."

"Which way are you going next, papa?"

"This way. You had better run home now, if the afternoon is to be set at liberty.—Isn't that so?"

"Yes, I suppose; but I should like to go with you if I might."

"Another time, my dear. Mamma is not very well, remember. My little girl is keeping her promise, eh?"

Doctor Tremaine gave his daughter a keen glance as he spoke.

The reply was not very ready, but when it did come, Violet met his eyes frankly, saying—

"Yes, papa, indeed I am, only-'

"Only, you had a letter this morning. Am I not right?"

"Indeed I could not help it. I have not writtenplease believe me."

"I do believe you, my dear, and exonerate you, even while feeling very much annoyed."

"It is rather hard on Willie though, papa."

"My dear, a promise is a promise, and to break one

given so earnestly, argues a weakness of character which arouses grave mistrust."

"But papa, I must tell you; it is all good news. He has been promoted, and thanked, for some recent action. Was it not natural that he should wish me to know first of all?"

"Perhaps it was." He smiled at the eager face.
"All the same, it would have pleased me much better if your Willie had been content to communicate through me. I don't want to play the stern parent, Violet, my little daughter, but try to realize that my action is the outcome of love, and anxiety for your true welfare, will you?"

"I do; oh papa dear, I do, really. If I had not been so sure on that point, I don't believe it would have been possible to keep silent all this time.

"I want to be quite sure, before I pass on one of my little girls to any man's keeping, that he is worthy of the trust, my lassic. You are far too young and untrained yet even to think of becoming a wife."

"Younger girls than I am marry sometimes, papa. Not that I want to be married; no indeed!"

"And marry to almost certain misery, child;" was the grave reply. "Believe me, that in this matter I know best, and expect to be obeyed. This young Hayton must be tested; if he is made of genuine stuff he will only improve by keeping. If not, my little

Violet will thank papa one day for being firm now, I am sure of that."

Father and daughter had been walking slowly up the hill as they talked: now he stood still, and smiling lovingly at the piquant face raised to his, continued—

"Young wives—too young that is—mean frequently young old women, old before their time, with all the brightness and charm worn off too soon. I mean to ensure, if possible, that such is not your fate; and, as I hate long engagements, have only one course to take, you see. Now then run away. I will promise to judge your Willie as leniently as possible, even though there is a broken pledge to score up against him. Meanwhile, learn all you can as to managing a home: if you fail to make a model wife when the right time comes—I don't know—but it is quite possible, I might disown you!"

Violet laughed, and squeezing his arm lovingly, turned and ran homeward in child-like light-heartedness; while her father, after watching her flying figure a moment with an amused smile, pursued his upward course, saying to himself—

"I'll write to Hayton's employer; he may be able to tell me something more about the young fellow. After all there is possibly more in him than I imagined. Certainly he seems to have made a strong impression on the child. Be that as it may, however, if he is not steady, I'll withhold my consent against all entreaties. I would much, very much rather see a child of mine buried, dearly as I love them all, than wedded to that misery. I wonder whether there really was any truth in that gambling report? I hope most earnestly not. That vice, when it has once laid hold of a young man, or indeed, anyone, takes more uprooting than almost any other."

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE TORMENTS OF LOVE.

"BLESS us an' save us, my dear chiel'! Whatever hev'ee got to look that whist about? Seemeth to me you'm getting more a sick look every day. Tell about feeling stronger! Faith, a body might think as how you'd been overlooked. For goodness' sake, what's it all about, I wonder?"

"I am well enough, Lyddy;" said Zenobia wearily; "only worried."

"What hev'ee a got to werrit about, I'd just like to know? 'Pon my soul, I would that!"

"You do know, quite well, Lyddy."

"I know? How should I know anything about it? Seemeth to me I've got best cause to werrit, after all's said and done! There's the maister, drat him, storming round downstairs, for all the world like 'a bear weth a sore head,' as the saying is."

"Where is he now? I have not heard his step or voice lately."

"How on earth should I know? If he's out, I hope as how he'll bide a bit. Then there's Mr. Penmaur—he's everlastin wanting to know when you'm coming downstairs again. I wish to goodness as how you'd be quick about it!"

"You had better obtain leave from the doctor then. You know what he said quite as well as I do."

Paying no heed to the interruption, Lydia continued-

"There's his notes, too. The paper he's destroyed is just wicked waste."

"I wish you would refuse to bring them up. They

only trouble me to no purpose. Oh Lyddy! Lyddy! why are you so unkind to me? I want a friend—a real true friend—so much, and don't seem to have one in the whole world!" the girl exclaimed, bursting into passionate tears. "I am so unhappy, and I never imagined for a moment that you would turn against me."

"Turn agin 'ee? Now how do 'ee make that out? Baint I trying every way I know to make sure as you'll be happy for life?"

But Zenobia only shook her head, while the tears

still flowed unrestrained.

"What is it you'm crying about like that? Now do

'ee stop, there's a good maid."

"If you really want to make me happy, Lyddy, don't, please don't be Mr. Penmaur's friend any more. It is all of no use. I shall never, never marry him," the girl said, between her sobs. "How could I hope to meet mother again in heaven if I willingly became the wife of a man I believed to be utterly bad?"

"Tut, tut, how for goodness' sake do 'ee make that out? Seemeth to me he wants to do nothing but good

to you, anyhow."

"You do not understand! How can you? Of course he is ready to promise anything; promises are easily made and, with some people, even more easily broken."

"But what is there bad in the man's trying to win your love, I wonder?"

"How does he set about it? Not by helping me to reclaim my father, but by worming the way into his confidence through his worst weakness. Making it easy for him to become a bond-slave to drink again, when he was just beginning to escape from its horrible trammels. Why, even you must see how rapidly he is slipping back and losing ground. I am

right, Lyddy, say what you like. After all, instinct is a girl's best guide, I believe!"

"I never see the young gentleman drinking with the master, so I don't know how you make that out."

"You cannot help knowing that, of late father has more than once come in the worse for drink, which since mother died he has never done before. That is not the only thing either. It is difficult to explain my feeling, but almost from our first meeting I have felt that Mr. Penmaur was not worthy of confidence."

"Tan-ni-by!" exclaimed Lydia, with an impatient flounce.

"If it were not for the promise I gave to mother, you would have driven me away before now," continued Zenobia, slowly. "I think I could earn my living, and it would be much better to make the attempt, than willingly commit a sin, for the sake of an easy life."

"Earn your living? A lot you know what that means, or you'd talk no such nonsense! No, my dear chield, I want to see 'ee a lady, same as your blessed mother was in her young days; that's what I want."

"Nothing could have made mother anything but a lady, Lyddy. If I am not one now, no position could alter that fact."

"Position, as you call 't, can give 'ee a lady's surroundings though, anyhow."

"You may be quite sure that your ambition for me will never be satisfied by the road you want, Lyddy," returned Zenobia, with a wintry smile. "Instead of becoming a lady, I should not even be a true woman, if I did as you wish,"

"Well, I'll not werrit 'ee any more now; though I be main vexed, I own."

"Why should you be? Are you so tired of having me at home?"

"Tired? What should make me tired? No, of course not. 'Twould be dull enough without 'ee for sure and sartin!"

"Then don't try to make it harder for me to do what I believe to be right."

It was a week after Zenobia's fall, and Mr. Penmaur, who still lingered, had persuaded his host to accompany him in a long ramble, leaving Lydia in attendance on the invalid, who still remained persistently secluded.

"Have you seen how the railway works are progressing lately?" asked the younger man as they started. "I am rather inclined to take a few shares. They may not be much of an investment at first, but I believe they will become a property in time. What do you advise?"

"You might do worse, perhaps. I thought you told me the other day there was nothing better than shipping just now, though?"

"True; only I object to having too much sunk in one thing. It is bad policy."

"The little money I have been able to lay by is

hardly worth dividing."

"In that case, I should advise you to follow my mother's example—put it in the shipping. Why, in four or five years at most, as things are now, the whole of the principal would be returned in interest."

"I have been thinking about it, and may possibly follow your advice."

"By the bye, I forgot to mention it before. Have you any floating capital handy just now?"

" Why?"

"Well, I had a private tip this morning, and think we might both make a good thing out of some shares which are just changing hands."

"What, and where are they?"

"They are in America. What, I am not at liberty to say. I am putting a few hundreds into my broker's hands to buy for me. If you like to trust me, I can do the same for you."

"A few hundreds appear to be nothing to you. I only own a few altogether! If there is a hundred to

my account at present it will be as much."

"Well, I might be able to make fifteen or twenty per cent. for you. If you choose to try your luck, I shall be writing in the morning. You don't care to speculate, I suppose, and buy a thousand or two? That is the way money is made."

"I never have done so. Money is lost as well as

made by that means."

"Of course there is always some risk; but know-

ing how to buy is the great thing."

"Why, that is surely young Peardon!" exclaimed Mr. Marsh presently, as Zedekiah strode towards them; "I did not know he was still here."

"The young man who rescued our dear patient, isn't he? I am glad to have an opportunity of

thanking him for his timely assistance."

Zed was passing with a brief "good-evening" but Mr. Marsh detained him, saying—

"You are proceeding very rapidly now, I hear. Will all be in readiness by the original date?"

"Not quite finished, I fear; we have had one or two unexpected delays; but sufficiently so for the opening to take place as arranged."

"This is a friend of ours-Mr. Penmaur," said Mr.

Marsh, graciously presenting his companion to this old pupil. At the name, which he had not hitherto heard mentioned, Zed started, and looked curiously at the stranger, as the latter, in a somewhat patronizing tone said-

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Peardon; more especially as I wished very much that an opportunity might occur for me to tender my hearty thanks for your prompt kindness a few evenings since."

"Indeed! I am not aware of having earned your

gratitude, sir."

"I refer to the accident which has laid Miss Marsh aside. I thought," he added with a slight laugh, "that our relationship to each other was well known in the neighbourhood."

"I have very little time or inclination for listening to local gossip;" replied Zed, calmly meeting the curious glance the other bestowed on him.

His companions had turned, and all three were

slowly mounting the hill which led to the town when he remarked-

"I met a Miss Sybil Penmaur at Plymouth last summer: could she be a relation of yours, I wonder. Sir?"

"If she was the guest of Mabel Inglis, yes; my only sister."

"The young lady is well, I trust?"

"I presume so; she never was much of a correspondent, and since her marriage, which took place in the spring, I have heard of her even less."

"Married, is she? I did not know that."

"Indeed! I am surprised that Miss Inglis did not mention the fact. She married a neighbour of ours, and, as they have been abroad almost all the summer, we have not met since."

"Then that foolish affair with Bert was effectually stopped," thought Zed; "I wonder where he is now, poor lad."

"That has been a stiffish pull for you, Mr. Marsh," remarked his companion, when the top of the hill was at length reached. "Suppose we rest awhile at the Northumberland Arms?"

"Very well."

"Good-night, Mr. Peardon."

"So that is the lover, is it?" thought Zed, as he turned away. "How confidently he spoke. I wonder whether he has reason to do so? It is high time I found out, for my own peace of mind."

Doctor Tremaine was resting, in dressing-gown and slippers, after a fatiguing country round that night, when a ring at the bell made him exclaim impatiently—

"Who the dickens can that be, I wonder? I've the best mind in the world to say I will not budge again to-night for anybody!"

"Mr. Peardon would like to see you a moment, Sir,"

said the housemaid presently, opening the door.

"Peardon? Eh, what, my friend Zed? Oh bring him in here. You are a late visitor, my lad, but I am glad to see you. I was just telling Mrs. Tremaine that I would not turn out again for anybody; so it's a good thing you are not a patient."

"Yet, Mr. Peardon," laughed his wife, merrily shaking her head, "if you were to say that somebody needed his attention, he would start off at once without a murmur; that is what his grumbling usually amounts

to."

"That is just exactly what I have come to say, Mrs. Tremaine."

"Eh?" cried the doctor, starting at once to his feet. "Who? Where?"

"Here Sir. I want to consult you myself."

"Then I will say good-night, and leave you to state the case. I cannot however see much evidence of illness in your appearance," said the lady.

"Now then, come over here, and tell me what is the trouble," said the doctor, as the door closed on his wife's retreating form.

"Please pardon my joke," remarked Zed, as he obeyed. "I do not need any physicking; only a little good advice."

"So! That was a ruse to get rid of my wife, eh? You impudent young rogue! And to confess it to my face!"

"I assure you I had no intention of being impertinent; even though I did want to see you alone, doctor," Zed exclaimed anxiously.

"I don't imagine you had, young man. Well, what is the trouble?"

"I have not called at the house lately, but am told that Miss Marsh is not recovering so rapidly as you at first hoped she would, Sir."

"Well?" The doctor spoke enquiringly, but a humorous twinkle appeared in his shrewd kindly eyes.

"Oh, Sir!" Zed rose and walked restlessly up and down the room. "You must have guessed, though I have been careful to say nothing, how much, how very much, she is to me. The hope of some day being able to tell her so has nerved me, many a time, to struggle on, when difficulties appeared at first sight overwhelming. I believed in myself; believed that, given time, it was in my power to make a name, and position, which I need not hesitate to ask even her, my peerless queen, to share."

"Well, and what has occurred to prevent the realization of your dream?"

"I am come to you to learn the truth. There is no one else to whom I can speak, or I would not have disturbed you at this hour."

"Sit down, my lad, you are not disturbing me.

Once more, what is the trouble?"

"A lover."

"Oh, then that rumour has got to your cars, has it? I thought as much."

"I heard it almost immediately after I came, but did not give the story much credence. To-night, however——"

"What has occurred to-night especially?"

Zed left his seat once more, and striding to the door and back, burst out passionately—

"To-night I met the man himself, and he claims her; coolly gave me to understand that he was not only her lover, but an accepted one! I wonder I did not do him an injury!"

"The dickens he did!"

"Undoubtedly."

"Well, all I can say is, if his statement is true, there is no more trust to be put in womankind. I am so sure of Zenobia's opinions regarding that young gentleman, that I shall take the liberty of disbelieving his word, until I hear it confirmed from her own lips. But, my lad, why not let her know your hopes?"

"Doctor Tremaine! Oh Sir, dare 1?"

"Dare indeed! Bless me, yes! I should have done so long before now if I had been in your place."

"But even now she appears to be far as the stars above me."

"Try your fate; I say no more. Go home and put the case to her in your best style. If you bring me a note in the morning, I will act Cupid for once in a way. A comical Cupid, eh?" laughed the gentleman, touching the top of his bald head.

Zed tried to thank him, but stumbled sadly in the attempt; while the doctor, with an exaggerated yawn said—

"No thanks I beg. I'm far too sleepy to hear them. Be off and compose a fetching letter, while I, who am no longer a prey to love's sweet uncertainties, seek some well-earned repose. I wonder whether the usual fate of the meddler will be mine;" he mused, as the young man disappeared.

Zenobia was lying the following morning wistfully watching the play of the flickering sunlight among the trees which clothed the castle slopes, and thinking, not only of the accident from the effects of which she was still suffering, but also of him who had rendered such prompt assistance. Why had he never called to enquire for her since that first day? Her thoughts were so absorbing that she did not hear the gate open to admit the friendly doctor; he was in the room before she was aware of his approach.

"The breeze is fresh this morning; look at those sycamore leaves; there will be rain before night," he observed, laying his fingers on her wrist.

"Yes, it is quite a relief after yesterday's heat."

"You do not appear to be reaping much benefit from it, I must say. It is a humiliating confession for a doctor to make, but I am nonplussed by your slow recovery, young lady."

"Are you? My back still aches badly."

"I fancy that might possibly be conquered, if you had sufficient incentive to exertion. I intend trying the effect of a fresh prescription to day; you will find it enclosed in this envelope. Scan it carefully."

<sup>&</sup>quot; But----"

"Ask no questions; and as it is necessary that you should absorb the contents undisturbed, if the full benefit is to be obtained, I shall take the liberty of telling my friend Lydia not to come near your ladyship for the next hour."

"You are pleased to be mysterious, doctor," laughed the girl as she took the letter.

"Well I may be; now good morning. I am in a hurry and will leave the charm to work.

As he ran rapidly downstairs, Mr. Marsh met him at the foot.

"Umph, you here again;" he remarked gruffly. "Well have you given that girl something more to keep her still secluded?"

"What do you mean?"

"What I say."

"Come old friend, that is a queer tone to take. Zenobia was more shaken by her fall than I at first thought, but she will soon be all right again, I hope. Is your guest still here?"

"What is that to you?"

"Decidedly my ancient friend is becoming more than churlish," thought the doctor, as, making no reply, he walked away. "His daughter is right; this new acquaintance has done him far more harm than good. It's a queer method of wooing the maiden, to commence by pandering to her father's weak side."

Zenobia, when left alone, turned over her letter with an amused smile on her face, believing it to contain some joke on the doctor's part, and feeling in no hurry to unravel the mystery. Presently laying it down, still unopened, she continued sewing, striving to recall the thoughts his arrival had interrupted, but her eyes persistently turned from outside attractions, to that neatly directed envelope on the window-sill.

At length, lying back on her cushions with a tired sigh, she slowly passed her scissors under the flap, and took out the enclosed closely written sheet, still with the same amused smile. It faded, however, as she read to the end of the first page, then, turning it over, she glanced at the signature and, forgetful of her weak back, started to her feet exclaiming—

"I was right; Those mysterious books *did* come from Zedekiah Peardon after all! It is precisely the same writing. Then he has remembered me all these years!"

It's really a pity, a great pity, that no one was at hand to witness the beauty which transformed the sadfaced, mournful girl in those first minutes of knowing that her childhood's hero had made her his heroine! Pale? no indeed, that was true no longer. A brilliant flush spread itself over the white cheeks, and the eyes, always beautiful, became lamps of living, happy light.

"Dear Zed," she murmured; "what absurd nonsense he talks! Presumption, indeed! Where is it, I should like to know? Has he not always been true and noble; and, better than all—did not mother love him, even in those early days, and prophecy a noble future for him?"

him?"

Doctor Tremaine pretended to be astonished, when, on looking in about dusk that evening to see how his charm worked, he found his patient in the sitting-room downstairs, where she had evidently been presiding at the late tea-table.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, "so I have got my dismissal, eh? What a disinterested man I must be, don't you think so?"

"You are perfect, simply perfect;" she replied emphatically.

"Not quite," he laughed; "there is a fair share of the

old Adam clinging about me yet. Is the counter charm ready?"

"Yes, here it is," and with a pretty blush, she placed in his hand the note which should render Zedekiah happier than he had dared to even dream of becoming, for many a day to come.

"So your office as head nurse can be abandoned now, Lyddy, I see. You are by no means sorry to accept a summary dismissal, I suppose?"

"Sorry? No, fey, I baint that. 'Pon my word, I'd begun to think her meant to live upstairs altogether."

"Oh Lyddy, did you really imagine that I was pretending to be ill all the time?" questioned Zenobia reproachfully.

"No, I baint quite so blind as all that would come to. Howsomever, I be glad you've got a turn at last."

"I shall call for you to-morrow afternoon about two; my best prescription is a drive, and, as I have to go over to Lewannick, will take you in charge myself. Any objections, ch?"

"Oh, Doctor Tremaine, how could I have? That will be too splendid! I shall be ready, you may be sure."

"Ah, there you are, Tremaine," exclaimed Mr. Marsh. "I thought I heard your voice. This girl has found her feet again you see; and her tongue too, it appears; she was chattering like a magpie just now."

"Yes she will do now, I hope, with care. A real rest after dinner for some time yet will be a necessity, remember;" he added turning to Zenobia, "but if I am not greatly mistaken, your own feelings will tell you that without any need of words from me. I must be off now; two o'clock prompt to-morrow; mind you don't keep me waiting."

## CHAPTER XVI.

## OF LOVE AND LOVERS.

HOW eagerly the completion of the new line was anticipated in this normally quiet town, can only be adequately understood by those whose lives are placed in pretty much the same conditions. Dwellers in our large cities would probably smile in a superior manner, if the possibility of anything exciting them to the same degree, which was not of purely personal interest, were even suggested.

The excitement among all classes grew daily more intense, as arrangements were made for marking the event in such an unusual manner, that even youngest child who was capable of taking part, should never be able to forget the opening of their own hardly fought for line. Triumphal arches of gigantic dimensions adorned the entrance to all the principal streets; while the roadsides were transformed into bowers of beauty, by well-grown trees from the nearest woods being transplanted for the occasion. Mottoes, composed of flowers, or gas jets, greeted the eves from almost every house front; and, on the morning of the eventful day, the streets were swept as clean as the newly painted houses themselves. But these were only preparations for, and adjuncts of the grand feature of interest—the procession! The rising sun on that morning, as he shed rosy beams over the surrounding hills, might have imagined, by the appearance of things here, that his arrival had been delayed beyond the allotted time. Everybody, even the children, seemed to be astir, and all were as

busy as bees. During the clear sunny morning hours, waggon after waggon proceeded leisurely to the meeting place outside the town; each decorated in some appropriate manner, to illustrate the trade of its owner for the time being, some of them had seldom, if ever, since their working-days began, experienced such a thorough cleansing as had just befallen them, and certainly few, if any, of these useful conveyances had ever presented such an attractive appearance. A constant stream of arrivals from towns and villages at a distance, poured in from every quarter; until there really appeared to be room for no more. Every inn-yard was crowded to overflowing, with nondescript vehicles; many of the jaded steeds which had brought them hither, being very nearly worn out by their toilsome journey, commenced long before dawn.

The morning was lovely, clear, and bright; so clear, that a group of eager excited children laughed to scorn the gloomy forebodings of one of the town notables, "the oldest inhabitant" who, as he hobbled along leaning on a strong stick, and clad in an ancient much embroidered smock-frock, shook his head, with its fringe of straggling grey locks, forebodingly, when hailed by the delighted exclamation—

"I say Jan, baint this 'ere a grand day for our spree?"

"Iss, iss, it's fine eno' now for sure, but it'll be a desateful wan for all that though; mark what I do say. I baint Jan Short, that I baint, if it don't rain summat a'fore night. My old woman and me we's get a wettin' I'm main feared. That's bad for the rheumatis, that is."

"Rain! Not it," was the reply. "You'm always croaking, you be."

"Croaking or no, I'm in the right on't, that you'll see 'fore long; worse luck."

John was right, as the old man usually was on any question concerning the weather;—as, soon after noon, groups of white clad little girls, led by proud brothers, whose dark jackets were each adorned with red and white satin rosettes, pinned on the left side, hastened to the appointed spot, where the much decorated waggon with seats rising tier above tier appointed their arrival down some the mich of the sating of the s awaited their arrival, down came the rain. At first only a few large drops made the little hearts sink, but it soon resolved itself into a steady downpour, speedily converting the smart muslins into limp unsightly coverings for the tiny tearful wearers. However, in varying conditions of temper, some cross as cross could be, others philosophically enduring their unexpected discomfort; each was at length secured in her place, next to a dark coated boy, who bore a flag in his right hand; and after a while their conveyance started, followed by another, where, under an awning of branches, and surrounded by tall ears of wheat, and a very wilderness of flowers, sat, hand in hand, old Jan and his equally time-worn, withered little wife.

Since she received Zedekiah's precious letter, and acknowledged in her reply that his love was by no means indifferent to her, Zenobia had not only recovered strength, but spirits as well; breaking ever and anon, much to Lyddy's delight, into one of her old trilling songs. Mr. Penmaur had not remained many days after her reappearance downstairs, but during those few, our young lady had contrived to rouse not a little troubled wonder in that gentleman's mind. "Why on earth?" he questioned of himself,

"can't I carry out my intention, and tell her, what Mr. Marsh and myself desire?"

But, though Zenobia was not only polite in her manner, but exceedingly genial as well, somehow no opportunity came of which he could avail himself, so his host saw him depart without having the satisfaction of hailing him as a future son-in-law. This disappointment made Mr. Marsh more than ordinarily churlish in his manner to all and sundry. However, though sorry to have vexed her father, Zenobia was too thankful at her escape, for his ill-temper to render her unhappy for long.

This morning she was evidently more than happy. So glad of heart, that her delight had become something akin to pain. Over and over again, she whispered ecstatically to herself. "My Zed will be the hero of the day, I do believe, how happy, how bliss-

fully happy I am."

Even when clouds began to gather, her inward sunshine was proof against the adverse elements.

"Isn't it time we started, father?" she remarked as the clock struck twelve.

"Very well. There is no special hurry is there? Tremaine is sure to reserve us a place."

"I know that, but don't you want to see the train arrive, before going up there? I do."

"What! in this rain? Not if I know it!"

"It doesn't rain much yet. Please do father, I have been looking forward to that more than anything."

Mr. Marsh grumbled a little, but eventually consented.

As the train neared its destination, Zedekiah, who rode on the engine, wondered again and again whether Zenobia would be an eye-witness of his arrival. These lovers were, as yet, though some time had elapsed since

their liking for each other had been declared, outwardly nothing beyond ordinary acquaintances; rightly or wrongly—who shall judge?—the girl, while confessing herself to be more interested in Zedekiah's welfare than in that of any other man, had given him plainly to understand, that their mutual interest must as yet remain a secret; so their meetings had been few, and when they did occur, always in the presence of others who had no suspicion of their attraction for each other. "Father would only be terribly angry now, so to speak would be worse than useless, and I will not agree to clandestine meetings," was her reply when a second note reached her through the friendly doctor. "You will tell me all you hear I know doctor dear; but please don't bring any more letters," she added. "I am happy now, and can wait until the way is quite plain."

"Right my dear," was the hearty reply. "If I had

"Right my dear," was the hearty reply. "If I had not been so sure that it would not occur again, I should not have consented to play cupid this second time. The lad would never have begun the matter if I had not encouraged him, truth compels me to state," he

continued, laughingly.

"I shall not scold you for that doctor, though I am afraid it was very naughty on your part," she whispered shyly.

"Well, well, you were most to blame after all," he

said in an aggrieved tone.

"I? How could that be?"

"Easily. Were you not making us all miscrably anxious by appearing as though no interest in life remained to you? I hit therefore on the plan of producing one!"

"And succeeded to perfection!"

"So it appears! I intend adding to my professional notices a hint that I undertake mental, as well as

physical cases, and shall apply to you for my first testimonial," he exclaimed, bidding her good-bye.

Yes, she was present; Zedekiah saw that at a glance, as he stepped from his post on to the unfinished platform, lifting his hat as he did so to the little group of friends. He was really only conscious of her presence; and his heart was beating high with hope, for had not Mr. Inglis complimented him publicly on the manner in which his own especial duty had been performed? Who could tell how soon it might be possible for him to claim his beloved?

Zenobia replied to his greeting by a beaming smile, interested wholly in what interested him, but her father had not even seen his arrival, his attention being concentrated elsewhere. She felt strongly inclined to resent this neglect which appeared a premeditated slight. But in an instant her heart sank as he pulled her sleeve, saying—

"I thought my eyes deceived me at first, but Mr. Penmaur is over there; look!"

"Mr. Penmaur? O father, I hope not!"

"You hope not? What do you mean by that, pray? I am very glad, very glad indeed, to welcome our friend back."

Yes, there was no mistaking the slim, well-dressed, almost too well-dressed, figure, who presented so great a contrast to his surroundings. Evidently he was intent on making his way as rapidly as possible to their own party.

Violet Tremaine had recognized him at the same moment, and was about to propose an instant retreat to her friend, when something in his companion's appearance rivetted her own attention, and set her heart beating painfully. Was it, could it be, the man she had learned to love so long ago, and ever since vainly endeavoured to forget?

The words she was about to utter died on her lips. How was it possible that, of her own free will, she could leave her post now? At least until she was quite sure.

In a moment her uncertainty was set at rest; it was himself, and she was not forgotten, for he advanced directly to her side, saying, in a would-be careless tone—

"You remember me, I trust, Miss Tremaine? This

meeting is a much anticipated pleasure."

"Of course I remember you, Mr. Hayton. Are you quite well?" was the low reply. Outspoken Violet appeared to have grown extremely shy on a sudden, for, after that first startled glance of recognition, she kept her eyes persistently lowered, while her head was in a whirl of conflicting and chaotic thought.

"She is prettier than ever," thought the young man, as he took a leisurely and appreciative survey of the dainty little figure, in its pretty summer serge costume, and large white hat.

"Have you no welcome to give me?" he whispered presently. "I thought Cornish people were instinctively hospitable."

"You have taken me by surprise," she said slowly, raising her head at length, and fixing her large dark eyes, which had a pathetic gleam in them just now, steadily on his face.

Zenobia's silence, as her unwelcome admirer approached, was covered by her father's voluble welcome, who instantly claimed his attention, while the girl's eyes were again turned towards the friend of her childhood. Zedekiah was busily engaged in describing, to a group of eager committee men, the working of his

beloved engine; while his employer stood aside, an approving smile irradiating his kindly face. Violet recalled her wandering attention by saying—

"Zennie, this is a gentleman I knew some time ago

-Mr. Hayton-Miss Marsh."

Zenobia raised her eyes, as she took the offered hand, to the stranger's face, evidently intent on reading, if possible, what kind of man this might be. What attraction did he possess, she wondered, for would-be critical Violet? And how on earth did he get here?

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Miss Marsh," he said. "Indeed, I seem to know you already. My friend Penmaur has so often mentioned Mr. Marsh and

yourself."

Before Zenobia could reply Doctor Tremaine hastily

joined them, saying-

"Come, come, girls, we shall miss the great event of the day if we are not quick. Why, bless my soul Penmaur, you here again! When did you turn up,

pray?"

"Just in time to witness the arrival, Doctor, and have brought a friend with me, you perceive. Did you really imagine I should be able to remain away, when affairs of such importance were taking place here? Hayton, come and be introduced."

"Hayton—Hayton, why—why who the dickens can the fellow be?" muttered the doctor. "Not my little Violet's flame, surely? I thought we should hear

nothing more about that young man."

However, Violet herself now came forward, saying-

"You have heard me speak of Mr. Hayton, I know, papa."

"Yes, yes I remember, of course I do. Well come away now, all of you. I'll not say whether you are welcome, or the reverse, young gentleman, until I know

something more about you," he concluded in an under-

The words sounded abrupt, not to say rude, but the speaker's genial manner took from them anything like a sting. "Come Zennie," he continued, tucking her hand beneath his arm, "you and I intend seeing all there is to be seen, don't we? Come along."

Charles Penmaur very nearly gnashed his teeth with impotent rage, when he saw the object of his passion borne off before his eyes; before too, he had even exchanged a word with her.

"If you do not follow soon, I am afraid all the windows will be crowded up," the doctor called back as he started.

The pace at which his companion tore off in pursuit obliged Mr. Marsh to cease talking; he needed all his breath to keep up with him.

It was to no purpose, though. On reaching the house, the two gentlemen were at once conducted into a room already full of sight-seers, but a rapid glance convinced the younger man that Zenobia's tall, graceful figure was not among them.

Lily Tremaine, who crossed the room as he entered, leaving a group of young people, to welcome him, did not remain long.

"He is as cross as 'a bear with a sore head'," she reported, presently, rejoining her friends. "I wonder what ails him?"

"Perhaps he has seen you flirting with someone else, Lil, and doesn't care to play second fiddle."

"I! Do you think he cares the least bit about my movements? Not he! I wonder where Zennie is? That's the trouble, you may be sure."

Yes, where was Zenobia?

"Come with me," the doctor had said, when, breath-

less but triumphant, they entered the house, having successfully out-distanced their companions. "There is a position of honour reserved for you upstairs. Take off that cloak. Now then, let me be sure that you look specially attractive. Yes, quite satisfactory."

you look specially attractive. Yes, quite satisfactory."
"Why are you so anxious about my appearance?"
laughed the girl. "I thought you never saw what ladies wore?"

"That's all you know. I can be extremely particular on occasion. This way, and ask no questions. I have a very special motive for my present action;" he replied, leading the way and opening a door.

"Here we are, mamma. That grand arrival has taken place, and I have brought this child, as requested. I think, Miss Inglis, you will have heard the name of Zenobia Marsh before?"

Zenobia was more than puzzled, as she advanced to receive the young lady's eager greeting. "Who was Miss Inglis," she wondered; "and above all things, how could she possibly be interested in anything about herself?"

However, whether the acquaintance had a mysterious commencement or not, it promised to be a very pleasant one, she speedily decided, as, after a few moment's chat Mr. and Mrs. Tremaine left the two girls to themselves, and, with a sigh of utter satisfaction, Mabel Inglis said—

"This is simply a perfect arrangement. I cannot tell you how glad I am to get this opportunity of knowing you."

"But why? I don't in the least understand," said Zenobia.

"No? Do you not? Then I must explain. In the first place you must know that Mr. Peardon is in my father's employ. There," she laughed, as a swift blush

mounted in her companion's cheek; "you begin to comprehend, I see. Secondly, he—my father, I mean—has been very much pleased with him, and, as I think him a fine fellow myself——"

"Isn't he?"

Zenobia, at the risk of being considered rude, could not restrain the interruption.

"He is indeed. Therefore we wish to give him a pleasant surprise. Could anything be more delightful to him do you think, than to come home with my father some evening, and find you a guest with us?"

"I! Do you really mean it? But why, Miss Inglis?

You know nothing at all of me!"

"Do I not? Now I thought I did; I really thought I did! At least, if not personally, by repute."

"And you are willing to admit as a guest into your home, someone whom you only know by repute?"

"Quite willing, if that someone will only be persuaded to come! Well, what is your answer?"

Zenobia's eyes were dancing at the bare possibility of such pleasure, but she shook her head nevertheless.

saying-

"Your life must be a great contrast to my own in many ways, if you can decide on, and carry into effect so delightful a programme without needing to ask permission!"

"You would like to come then? That is what I am most anxious to discover just now."

"Like it? Of course I should!"

Mabel laughed. "So if I am willing to have you in my home, you are also willing to trust yourself with me, it appears! Which of us has given the strongest evidence of mutual attraction, I wonder?" she said.

"Oh, you have, of course. I merely long to accept an offered kindness. Why, do you know I have never been to Plymouth in my life, though I seem to know it well, for my mother spent a good deal of her girlhood there. How I wish you could have known her!"

"Mr. Peardon has mentioned her once or twice, and in so reverentially admiring a manner, that I know she

must have been very sweet and kind."

"I feel as though in a delightful dream," Zenobia resumed after a thoughtful silence. "Your invitation

is just like the introduction to a fairy story."

"You will find that you are not," said her companion in an amused tone, "but on the contrary, very wide awake indeed. I intend that you shall travel with papa and I when we return."

"But you are not staying more than a few days, you

said? That will be impossible."

"Not at all. Very few impossibilities ever loom up before anything I set my mind on. This is not going to be one, I prophecy."

Zenobia shook her head gravely. "We shall see,"

she said.

"Yes, we shall see. Hark! that is a drum; they are coming."

These two girls had so much in common, that the moments which still clapsed before eyes and ears were fully occupied passed all too quickly. Mabel appeared to comprehend instinctively what Zenobia would most like to hear, and gave evidence that she had been by no means content to learn about Zedekiah's actions only what she could glean from his own and her father's conversation.

"I met him one evening," she said, "when I had been spending the day with a friend some distance down the river, pulling a boatful of boys, such miserable little urchins to look at, but evidently uproariously happy, and laden with flowers. They had been

having tea at a farmhouse, he told me. The perspiration was pouring down his face with the exertion, but I never saw him looking happier."

"You heard about his kindness to my brother, I suppose?" questioned Zenobia presently.

"No; I think not!"

"If he had never done a kind act besides that, he could take rank as a genuine philanthropist," exclaimed Zenobia enthusiastically.

"Was it not a little for your sake?"

"No, no, indeed no! He did not even know who poor Ned was," and Zenobia repeated the story, in so earnest and impassioned a manner, that Mabel was surprised to discover how much fire and latent capacity for enthusiastic devotion lay concealed beneath her quiet exterior.

"I have discovered a friend after my own heart at length, I believe," thought the lady of wealth and leisure, as she contemplated the country schoolmaster's daughter, whose mobile face changed with every varying emotion. "If she is half as genuine as I imagine, it shall not be my fault if we do not see a great deal of each other. What a contrast to Sybil Penmaur!"



## CHAPTER XVII.

# EXCITEMENT AT DUNHEVED, ON MORE THAN ONE ACCOUNT.

VIOLET recovered her usual flow of spirits, and ready speech, as soon as her father was aware of the unexpected stranger's arrival; indeed her tongue rattled away as though speech were decidedly preferable to the most eloquent silence—on her part at least—while she and her companion slowly followed their friends—so slowly that, by the time their destination was reached, the street was comparatively empty; the crowd of sightseers having sought what shelter was attainable, compatible with seeing, or had taken possession of the numerous platforms erected at different corners.

As they neared the house Mr. Hayton said-

"So you really were surprised to see me?"

"I should think I was!"

"I wonder at that. You must have a much shorter memory than I possess."

"How so? What has memory to do with your appearance here, I wonder?"

"Only this—that our time of probation is drawing rapidly to a close. Why, Violet, did you really imagine that I had forgotten?"

"I had come to the conclusion," she replied with a nervous laugh, "that you were like the knight who 'loved and rode away.'"

"The circumstances are not parallel. In our case it was the lady who rode away, was it not?"

"If she did, there was no help for it;" she replied,

shaking her head, "and is very glad to meet the

knight again," she added shyly.

"That is the kindest thing you have said yet," he exclaimed, "I had almost begun to think my coming was a mistake."

"Why, what kind of welcome did you expect? It must be a year and a half since our last parting, and to meet in a crowd like that! Are you not surprised that I did not faint?"

"Not at all. I imagine you are not one of the sensational kind, young lady."

"That only shows how little you know me, sir."

"A fault that time and intercourse will banish," he replied oracularly. "I am of an inquiring turn of mind, and just now am possessed of a strong, a very strong desire to study one woman's nature, so pray, in the interests of science, give me every opportunity possible."

She laughed merrily, saying-

"Just now it will have to be in a mixed company, I fear. They will be wondering what has become of me at home."

"Oh dear; must we really go indoors?"

"Yes, indeed we must. Do you not want to see the great sight, which has brought you so far, in comfort?"
"Brought me, indeed! I like that! Yes, on second

"Brought me, indeed! I like that! Yes, on second thoughts, you are not so much altered as I feared. The tormenting element is still paramount, I find."

He was holding the gate as he talked, apparently not being at all inclined to raise the latch.

"Please let us go in," she said; "I am not particularly fond of getting drenched, if you are. It is raining heavily now."

"Iss, Miss Violet, you'm right, so 'tis. If so be I might pass, I'd be main'n glad."

"Why Lyddy, I thought you were here long ago!"

"And so I should ha' been if so be them there dratted boys would 'a started before. I warn't going to leave they the run of the house; not me!"

"Well go in now. Susie will be glad of your com-

pany, I fancy."

"Iss, fey, I daresay her will. Her'll be up in the

nursery weth the childre, I s'pose?"

Lyddy was calmly taking stock of the strange gentleman as she purposely lingered, and, on reaching the nursery, exclaimed—

"So your young missus have got a lover, it

seemeth?"

"Who? Miss Vi? Tan-ny-by. Not it!"

"Looks main like it, anyhow."

"Her's picked 'un up pretty soon then, that's all. There wern't none knocking about this morning to my knowledge."

"So you really have come back at last!" exclaimed Lily, as Violet opened the door of the crowded drawing-room. "I began to think you had taken yourself off for the day. Why!—"

"This is Mr. Hayton, Lily. I met him at the station

iust now."

"Please give me a welcome, Miss Lily," said the stranger in a would be pathetic tone, as the surprised girl contemplated him in speechless amazement. "I feel painfully like a stranger in a strange land, whose unfortunate presence communicates to all whom he happens to meet, a serious electric shock. I do indeed!"

"But-why, how did you get here?"

"By a most ordinary mode of travelling, I assure you. Behind a pair of jaded steeds."

"There they come," cried Doctor Tremaine at this

moment. Come young folk, squeeze in here. Dunheved is a very proud town to-day. Witness the manner in which she proclaims her triumph."

"If it only wouldn't rain," remarked one and another

pathetically. "It is such a pity."

"What has become of Zennie, Lil?" whispered Violet presently; "I don't see her."

"No, she isn't in the room. Did she come up?"

"Yes, with papa."

"Then he has hidden her somewhere, you may be sure. Mr. Penmaur is savage enough to bite one;" she laughed, shrugging her shoulders.

"What does Mr. Marsh say?"

"I don't think he has missed her yet. His sight gets worse, I fancy."

The music was drawing nearer now, and under cover of the noise, Lily whispered—

"I say, Vi, where *did* he come from? Were you not scared?"

"Awfully."

"Are you glad?"

"I hardly know yet. Yes, of course. How do you like him?"

"How can I tell yet? He would have made an awfully pretty girl," she added slowly. "What eyes he has!"

"Rubbish! Girl, indeed! Why shouldn't a man be good-looking, I wonder?"

Violet turned her back ostentatiously on her sister, favouring her companion during the next half hour with her exclusive attention, regardless of the curious eyes by which they were surrounded.

"Violet Tremaine knows how to flirt," whispered one girl enviously. "Look at her."

"That's something more than flirting though, I believe. I wonder who he is?"

"Oh look, isn't that good? Our old church, perfect in every detail;" cried Lily presently.

"Listen," exclaimed a friend; "why, the organ is being played inside!"

"Well I never, so it is!"

"I wonder how that tower passed under the archway?" one lady questioned.

"It has not done so without damage, look;" was the reply. "One of the pinnacles has disappeared."

"Oh Doctor Tremaine, did you ever see any sheep quite so white as those two before? They must have had a tremendous sousing in mottled soap!" laughed a merry girl.

"The shepherd and shepherdess must surely have copied their costumes from a pair of dresden china figures," remarked another onlooker. "What particularly well-dressed cobblers! See how they are laughing; the rain is evidently no serious hardship to them!"

On they came: stonemasons, carpenters, glaziers, tailors, wheelwrights, tinkers, every possible trade of which the town could boast, was more or less realistically represented. Here a smart dairy-maid was busily employed, turning the rich golden cream into equally golden pats of butter. There, a miniature mill professed to grind the wheat, and turn out sacks of flour. And each waggon was so bountifully disguised with multitudes of flowers, ferns and huge branches, whose loss many a grand forest tree deplored, that it was quite impossible to say which pleased the eye most.

"Why, what has become of 'Youth?' That is 'Age' just passing, and 'Youth' was to precede it;"

exclaimed one lady, presently. "My Mabel and Charley were among the children," she added anxiously. "Where can they be?"

"There is Rundle. Ted, my boy, go out and ask him why that car is absent;" cried the Doctor. auick."

"The waggon broke down soon after starting, he says," was the information the boy brought back presently. "All the children are gone home."

"Any of them hurt?"

"One little girl had her arm crushed."
"Whose child? Do you know?"

"No, he didn't say."

"I had better go home at once, then," said Mrs. Pearse. "We are all out, and there will be serious wailing if my chicks find the door locked against them. They will be very wet too, poor mites."

This lady's departure was the signal for a general

clearance, and before many minutes had elapsed, the house was comparatively empty, all but the more immediate friends having taken their departure; the younger portion of those who had gone having an exciting subject of discussion in the good-looking and mysterious stranger, with whom Violet Tremaine appeared to be on such friendly terms.

"Zenobia - why bless me, Tremaine, what has become of my daughter? I thought she was here. It is high time we were starting home."

"So she is here; in another room, that is all. Sit down Marsh, sit down; she will join us in a moment. As to going home-don't think of it. We may as well all keep together for the remainder of the day."

"See, Papa, it is not raining so fast now. Oh, I do hope it will clear;" said Lily.

"I fancy it is going to. We may have it fine for the illuminations after all. I hope so. I have not had an opportunity of introducing you to a new acquaintance yet, Mamma;" the doctor continued. "This gentleman is Mr. Hayton, a friend of our Violet's."

The stranger acknowledged the introduction in an effusive manner; putting on a little perhaps, to cover his nervous anxiety. He really wished to create a good impression in this quarter.

" Lily."

"Yes, Papa?"

"I want you a moment. Tea will be ready soon Mamma?"

"Yes; almost at once, I expect. I remember your name, Mr. Hayton," said Mrs. Tremaine, as her husband and Lily left the room, "but hardly expected to see you here. Have you been long in the town?"

"Somewhere about four hours, I think;" was the laughing reply.

"Indeed! Then you have lost no time in renewing your acquaintance with my little girl, I must say!"

"Mr. Hayton was at the station, so I could scarcely help seeing him, Mamma;" Violet replied nervously.

"Hayton and I drove in together, Mrs. Tremaine," said Mr. Penmaur; "finding more companions on the road than I had any suspicion the neighbourhood boasted. There were nondescript vehicles enough in the continuous procession to remind one of the 'Derby' day, very nearly!"

"Which remark shows that, as yet, you only have a superficial acquaintance with the surroundings of our ancient town, Mr. Penmaur. I assure you that comfortable homesteads nestle in every hollow for many a mile away, and most of them will be deserted to-day. Did you, I wonder, come across little Jeffreys and his sons?"

"If they did," said Violet laughing heartily, "they

will surely never forget the sight!"

"I think I guess," exclaimed Mr. Hayton, "Mrs. Tremaine must mean those tiny men with their ricketty donkey carts."

"Then you did see them?"

"See them? I should think so! We had a long chat with the elder man. But you don't mean to say they are father and sons?"

"Indeed they are! And, more comical still, the little fellows each possess a sister almost as much taller than the average woman as he is deficient in height!"

"What an odd coincidence!"

"There is the tea bell, and my husband is coming with his companions, I hear. Yes, I should like you to be able to see Jeffrey's farmstead; it is quite notorious."

"Why Zennie, where have you been hiding?" whispered Violet, as, on leaving the room, her friend running downstairs, slipped an arm round her waist, with an ecstatic hug.

"Upstairs, of course. Having such a good time," she

added.

"You didn't deserve to, then, for leaving us all in a state of puzzlement."

"Doctor Tremaine knew where I was, and I thought you would guess, if no one else did. Miss Inglis and I found so many things to talk about, that the afternoon appears to have flown. She is so nice. I have quite fallen in love with her."

"Miss Inglis? Is she here? If I had known that before I should have seen light. I wonder Lily did not tell me!"

"I don't think she knew it herself; I heard Doctor Tremaine introduce her just now."

"So you have been talking, I should not wonder at all—may I say it?—about one admirer, while another was sulking in a corner with us."

"Now Vi, don't tease; there is a good girl. No one is likely to sulk, as you call it, over any action of mine."

"I like your modesty, if it is genuine, which I am strongly inclined to doubt just now! Mr. Penmaur is so openly interested in your movements that no one can help knowing why he haunts our small town. My dear, you are a regal beauty, but common-place people have their compensations after all. One lover at a time is quite sufficient for most of us. I should not care for more myself, they would be too upsetting."

"You little puss. Where has your newly discovered

"You little puss. Where has your newly discovered humble opinion of yourself come from? You commonplace, indeed! If you really thought so, you would

never have said it, I am confident!"

"Come, come, girls; why are you chattering out there? Do you know that you are keeping us all waiting?"

"Coming, papa."

Much to Dr. Tremaine's astonishment, when Miss Inglis and he entered the room, the young lady gave a distant nod of recognition in Mr. Penmaur's direction, and an expression of disdain rested for an instant on her face, which changed to one of genuine pleasure as, with a surprised exclamation, young Hayton came forward.

"Why Will," she said, what can you possibly be doing here?"

"May not the railway opening have attracted me as well as yourself, Mab?"

"I can't think that;" she replied, shaking her head. "Papa and I have a lively interest in the proceedings; that can hardly be the case with you."

"Well, the world is decidedly a small place," remarked the doctor. "I was prepared to make a whole host of introductions, and find my services in that way not required."

"Not here, indeed!" said Mabel, laughing. "Will and I used to quarrel and make friends when we were in the nursery."

"That is quite true," whispered Mr. Hayton to Violet, in a loud aside, "only," he added ruefully, "she always got the best of it!"

"Don't believe him, Miss Tremaine; I assure you he is giving a false impression—perverting facts; indeed he is! Is that Mr. Marsh across the room, Doctor? If so, please introduce me, and if I may have a seat next him, I should be glad. I have a special reason for making the request," she whispered.

"Certainly;" he replied. "Marsh, our Zennie has been entertaining this young lady during the last hour. Being a stranger, Miss Inglis did not care to join us in the drawing-room."

Mr. Marsh bowed stiffly. He had not yet conquered his annoyance on discovering his daughter's absence from the group in which he had himself been included.

"Where is she now?" he questioned. "Oh, there you are. I wonder what you mean by taking yourself off in that manner, without a word."

"If anyone is to blame I am, Mr. Marsh," said Mabel eagerly. "I was so pleased to have a quiet hour with Miss Marsh, that I fear it made me forgetful." Indi-

cating a vacant seat at her side, and looking pleadingly at her hostess, she continued—

"Miss Marsh may sit here, please, Mrs. Tremaine?"

"Surely, surely, my dear, if you wish it."

Though all who were privileged to enjoy the intimate acquaintance of Mabel Inglis would testify to the wonderful charm of her manner, and her great conversational powers, yet, in this instance, it appeared at first as though they would not prove powerful enough to win the good opinion of her taciturn companion. But difficulties only had the effect of making her more determined to succeed. First one method and then another was tried, while Zenobia, sitting silently by, or replying in monosyllables to the remarks of her other neighbour, felt quite astounded at her new friend's versatility. Little by little the young lady gained ground, until, before the meal was ended, she had the satisfaction of knowing that her persistent efforts had won their reward. Indeed, so sure did she feel of having destroyed all barriers, that she judged it safe to make her request at once. Squeezing Zenobia's hand under the table, to attract her attention, she said-

"I wonder whether I dare ask you, on so short an acquaintance, to grant me a favour, Mr. Marsh?"

"What service could a country schoolmaster possibly render to Miss Inglis?"

"A very great one indeed," she replied, in the same bantering tone, "if he is only willing!"

Zenobia scarcely recognized her own father, as, bowing in a courtly manner, he replied—

"Miss Inglis may command me. Who would not esteem it an honour to serve her?"

"Then I will venture. My request is this—and I am quite aware that it is a startling one—Will you

allow Miss Marsh to accompany me when I return home?"

"What Zenobia? Why, my dear lady, you know nothing whatever about her! I am indeed astonished!"

"I have spent all this afternoon in her company, and have set my heart on gaining my wish. Please do not refuse me."

"But your father? What would he say to such a

proposal?"

"He would be delighted at any request of mine being acceded to; and in this case I know your consent would please him quite as much as myself"

There was a puzzled expression on his face, as, peering curiously across at his daughter, Mr. Marsh said, questioningly,—

"And you? What would you like my reply to be?"

"Oh father, may I? I should so like to go."
"You would? I thought strangers seldom recommended themselves to you."

"Oh, but this is different. Miss Inglis does not seem like a stranger."

"There!" Mabel laughed, "that is a compliment worth having, and I shall consider the matter settled."

The foregoing conversation, though eager, had been so low-toned, that Charles Penmaur had been able to catch very little of it try as he would, and he had not scrupled to strain his attention; for this meeting and sudden friendship between the girl he professed to love and his sister's school-friend, Mabel Inglis, for some reason did not please him. Lily Tremaine, who sat at his other side, came to the conclusion that Zenobia was in the right very decidedly, in refusing to consider as a partner for life, any man who was such an adept at scowling, and capable of behaving so boorishly when things did not go as he wished. Perhaps she judged him severely.

"There," she whispered presently to her father, with a shrug and pout—"I have tried my hardest to be agreeable, and failed, so I shall talk to you now."

"Very well. What shall be the subject?"

"What but love and lovers? There is quite an epidemic surrounding us. The elements of a tragedy, I declare!"

"What do you know about such matters, I wonder, pussic?"

"Oh, I keep my eyes open, of course. It is fun to watch how blind they can be, especially when the attack is a serious one. I don't feel at all inclined to add to their number, that is a good thing." She shook her curly head gravely.

"Keep to that opinion, my dear, and you will please

your father;" he replied laughingly.

"I'm sure she wouldn't!" exclaimed Mrs. Tremaine, overhearing the remark. "Unless," she added gravely, "her choice were an unhappy one."

"Violet appears to be happy enough, anyhow. Eh,

oh! I wish he had stayed away. I really do!"

"Nonsense, Lily, my dear. Mr. Hayton's is only a friendly visit, remember."

"They don't think so, papa; that is plain enough to be seen!"

"Don't imagine that your eyes are so much sharper than other people's, Lily, my flower."

"They are about as wide open as Vi's, after all, mother dear."

"The rain has quite ceased," exclaimed Dr. Tremaine, as the meal concluded. "Now for the illuminations. Who are going?"

"Everybody, I expect," replied his wife. "You had better start at once. Don't wait for me; I must go to the nursery now."

"I'll help you, mamma, then we can be company for

each other," said Lily.

# CHAPTER XVIII

VIOLET REJOICING. ZENOBIA AT BAY.

I't was by no means easy for so large a party to keep near each other, our friends found, as they passed leisurely through the crowded streets; admiring and criticising now this design, now that. After attempting to do so for some time, seeing that Violet appeared to wish it, her companion at length whispered—

"Are you violently anxious to witness any more of the show?"

"Why?"

"Because, now that the rain has ceased, I long above all things for a quiet walk."

"Where could we go, I wonder, to be quiet, unless to the country? The roads there will be anything but pleasant for walking, I assure you."

"Let us try. I really do not think our absence will be noticed."

Violet demurred a little, but, ultimately consenting, led the way to a terrace just outside the town proper; usually a favourite resort in the evening, but deserted to-night for more novel attractions. As they proceeded, a magnificent panorama opened out before

them. Across the fertile valley, dotted here and there with cosy farmsteads, the eye was attracted by rising ground, growing ever more barren and rugged until the wilds of Dartmoor stretched away far as eye could see, glimmering mysteriously in the soft moonlight; a fitting abode for the pixies and fairies, with which local superstition peopled the weird neighbourhood. Violet and her companion had no eyes just then for the full appreciation of Dartmoor's peculiar beauty, however; their attention was concentrated on the happiness of being together, which had the effect at first of keeping their tongues still. Presently, gently placing the girl's hand on his arm, where he held it firmly, Mr. Hayton said-

"Do you know that you were very cruel—positively heartless,—in that last letter?"

Violet shook her head as she whispered softly—
"I do not think I was. Certainly I did not intend to be so."

"What did you mean then, by what you said?"

"What did I say?"

"As if you can possibly have forgotten! Your refusal to correspond was a cruel blow to me."

"Indeed, I could not help myself. Papa insisted.

Rightly, I think now."

"Then you were a little rebellious at the time? I am glad to know that."

"I did not say so."

"Perhaps not; you inferred it though. Tell me, would it have made no difference to you if I had never tried to see you again?"

"Don't be too inquisitive;" she laughed. "Leave us poor women one unchallenged peculiarity, pray."

"What? Inquisitiveness? But in this case I really am anxious to find out. Violet-" his voice was low and earnest—"may I speak to your father to-morrow?"

"What about?"

"Can you ask? Darling, I want to be sure of my little wife."

."Oh no! not yet! Please not yet."

"What is to be gained by waiting? Surely I am not mistaken—you love me, dear?"

"Yes—I think so," she whispered, but continued pleadingly, "You will wait a little longer, won't you?"

"But why? Where is the use of waiting indefinitely when we are both decided?"

"Are we? I don't remember saying that I was!"

"And I am sure you are," was the firm reply. "This is my little wife at my side, and, after enduring such a long probation, I am not in the least inclined to let her escape again, I assure you."

"I really am at a loss to know how you can be so certain!"

"Are you? I will try to explain myself more clearly sometime, then."

After a few moments, this remarkably cool, self-possessed young stranger remarked, in a meditative tone—

"It is puzzling, very puzzling; I am not aware of having met with a case like it before; but though the surroundings are extremely favourable, the word I am listening for does not come."

"What do you mean?" Violet looked up startled.

"Dear me, stranger still! she does not even know to what I refer!" he soliloquised.

"How absurd you are," she laughed. "What are you talking about?"



"I DID NOT THINK YOU (ASSESS SO MUCH." - PAGE 225



"I will reply by another question, Madamoiselle. Who are you talking to?"

"Why, to Mr. Hayton, I thought. At least, that is the name you used to bear."

"Bless me, is that so? I imagined that worthy old gentleman was, at the present moment, probably reclining in a comfortable armchair, with a handker-chief thrown over his bald head, and a newspaper outspread before him which he was pretending to read, many a league from this spot; but I am mistaken, it appears!"

Violet shook her companion's arm, and stamped her foot in mimic anger, as she caught a glimpse of his meaning, but did not speak.

"Isn't it coming?" he questioned presently, in a caressing tone. "It is not as pretty as yours, I am aware, but being the best I have is therefore precious to my self-love."

"Oh, dear, Will!—What a queer——" but the sentence was never finished, for, as soon as his name fell from those lips, Will Hayton caught the slight figure in his arms, and covered her face with kisses, while murmuring words of passionate endearment.

Violet, taken utterly by surprise, remained for a moment perfectly passive, hiding her face on his shoulder, then, gently freeing herself, she said, with an awed sob in her voice—

"I did not think you cared so much."

"Cared! My darling! My own sweet, modest Violet, I shall never be able to teach you, all our lives long, how much you are to me! And you? I am of a jealous nature, remember; and shall not be content unless you return my love with the same intensity."

Violet's reply was voiceless, but eloquent enough to satisfy even him.

to satisfy even him.

They walked on in blissful silence for some time, holding each other's hands like two loving children. One after the other numerous vehicles passed them, homeward bound; and the occupants looked curiously at the solitary figures who were walking too slowly to be bound for a distance. At length one jovial kindly farmer aroused them to the realization of time's rapid flight, by shouting—

"Hi there! D'ye want a lift, you two? If so be you do, jump up; we'll manage to squeeze 'ee in."

"No thanks," was the reply.

"Why where are we" said Violet startled.

"Why, where are we," said Violet, startled.
"Nearly three miles from home, I declare! We

must hurry back, we must indeed."

While Violet and her companion were improving while violet and her companion were improving their opportunity, and coming to a mutual understanding, the friends they had deserted continued to keep for some time together, but at length, much to Zenobia's dismay, she found herself separated from her father and his companion, by whose side she had hitherto managed to keep; and with only Mr. Penmaur near. The dots was called away almost immediately after they left the house.

"Oh dear," she exclaimed, "what can have become of father and Miss Inglis? Please let us try to find them"

"It would be a hopeless task in this crowd," he said. "Mr. Marsh is sure to guess that you are with me, so will not be anxious. I have tried in vain to secure an opportunity of speaking to you undisturbed, Miss Marsh;" he continued. "Can I voluntarily forego such a good one?"

Zenobia's heart was beating wildly; if her com-

panion had wished for the chance of speaking, she had striven hard to prevent his getting it. However, drawing her fine figure to its full height, and setting her lips firmly, she continued to walk silently at his side, saying to herself—"If he is determined to court a refusal—for he cannot help knowing what my reply is likely to be—I may as well take this chance of giving it. We shall both know then exactly where we stand." Presently, turning a corner, they found themselves in a deserted street, which was lit only by the changing moonlight.

"Miss Marsh," said her companion, in a quiet voice, "you are far from blind, and, as I have not striven in any way to conceal my feelings towards you, it is quite impossible that you should be ignorant of the words I wish to say. Ever since I first saw you on the coach that summer day, in your mourning dress, with the traces of recent bereavement on your countenance, my love and admiration has been steadily growing, and it is now so vigorous that I believe no action on your part could kill it. Your father has known for some time that the strongest desire of my heart is to make you my wife; and I came to Dunheved to-day, determined that before night fell, you should know it also from my own lips. Zenobia, my regal Queen of Hearts—you cannot—you dare not, refuse me. I——"

She lifted her hand, and, standing before him with the moon's pale gleam resting on her sweet face, and touching up the golden tints of her hair, said—

"Stop, sir, I beg of you; say no more. If I could have prevented your speaking at all I would have done so; for, as you say, I am not blind, and had no wish to experience the pain of saying that which

must now be said. I both can and dare to give you an absolute, unqualified refusal. You——"

" I\_\_\_\_"

"Please hear me out. You must have seen how I have striven to prevent your uttering the words just spoken—for if I am not blind, neither are you—but, as you were evidently determined that they should be said, I determined also to allow you the desired opportunity, and now beg you in return to accept my reply as final. I cannot be your wife."

"Suppose I refuse to accept your dismissal?"

"It will only cause needless suffering to us both if

"It will only cause needless suffering to us both if you are foolish enough to take such a course, and not change my determination one iota. Oh sir, why do you force me to speak so strongly?"

"Because I feel strongly!" he replied passionately.

"The desire to win you, and the determination to do so, has become part and parcel of myself. I cannot, and will not, believe that such love as mine is to go unrewarded. Sooner or later you will, you must be mine."

"Never!"

"Why? What reason have you for giving so emphatic a refusal?"

"Why? Will you have my reason? Very well, you shall then. Because the man I marry, if ever I do so, must be pure and true to the core; capable of being swayed by none but noble impulses, pandering to no evil, and absolutely incapable of becoming a prey to any gross forms of sin."

"You must imagine yourself to be acquainted with some such Sir Galahad," he sneered, "that you draw his portrait so correctly. What makes you imagine, however, that I do not illustrate in my own person, so attractive, but colourless, a picture?" "The imagination on my part would be great which led me to think that you did," was the sad reply. "Oh, sir, could you really conceive it possible that the way to win a daughter's heart was by helping her father to sink lower, and ever lower, in the thraldom of a vicious appetite? Had I been ever so favourably inclined towards you at first, such action on your part would have been powerful to kill any feeling of the kind."

"Then this is your final reply?"

"It is"

"Very well; as you say, we know where we stand, and—" he clasped her slender form suddenly and passionately in his arms, and kissed her lips before continuing—"let this be the seal that I intend to succeed, in spite of all you have said, or can say."

Zenobia's passion now equalled his own; her eyes

flashed fire, as, by a superhuman effort, she flung him

from her, and in a low, intense voice said-

"You coward! So you really would not object to an unwilling bride? Do your worst. God is on my side. I would, and will, gladly die rather than yield;" and, turning, she walked rapidly away, leaving the angry man gasping and confounded, a prey to wild and impotent rage.

Dashing away the tears which rose to her eyes with a passionate gesture, poor Zenobia hurried homeward, fearful lest he should again overtake her; never pausing until she had gained the shelter of her own room, and turned the key in the lock. Then, sinking on her knees, by the low window-sill, she let her tears fall unrestrainedly, sobbing-

"Oh mother, mother, what am I to do? It will be so hard, so hard."

Presently stilling her sobs, she rose, and rapidly

penned a note to Violet Tremaine; running down to the kitchen, she said—

"Are the boys all in bed yet, Lyddy?"

"Bless us an' save us, Missie! whenever did 'ee come in? Iss, they'm in bed for aught I know."

"Oh dear, that is a pity; I wanted to send this

note."

"I daresay us can manage that right enough. Where's it for?"

"Miss Tremaine."

"Why, for goodness' sake, what be 'ee sending notes up there for? Baint 'ee goin' to supper 'long with the rest?"

"No, not to-night. Get the note sent at once, please, then I shall come and see if I cannot have supper with you for once."

Violet and Mr. Hayton managed, by hurrying, to get back before all the party mustered at the supper-

table. As they entered the house Susan said—

"There is a note for you, Miss Violet."

"Where? That on the table? Why, it's from Zennie! What's the matter, I wonder?"

"Miss Marsh, I suppose?" questioned Mr. Hayton.

"Nothing wrong, I hope."

"No, I think not." Violet's face had contracted into a puzzled frown; "she has gone home instead of joining us for supper as arranged. I wonder why?"

"The ways of women are mysterious sometimes," he

laughed.

"Oh, there you are Violet," cried Mrs. Tremaine; "Your party seems to have got very much scattered. Lily and I failed to find anyone. What has become of Zenobia?"

"She has gone home it seems, mamma. This note is from her."

"Gone home? That is strange. Her father has been here for some time; and Mr. Inglis came back with his daughter. Zenobia's absence will be a disappointment, I think. It is not like her to act capriciously."

"So I was just saying. Can I be of any assistance, mamma?"

"No; go into the drawing-room, both of you. Supper will be ready in a few moments."

Zenobia need not have feared that her adversary would follow her when she fled. As soon as she disappeared Mr. Penmaur gathered himself together with a smothered oath, and hastened at once to his hotel, where he rapidly cast his soiled garments, ruefully contemplating their muddy condition; and presently, once more spic and span, left the house; hoping to come across some of the party, by which means it would perhaps be possible to prevent any suspicion of what had occurred arising among the friends at the supper table.

"Zenobia gone home!" exclaimed Mr. Marsh, when informed of his daughter's whereabouts. "What has come over the girl now? Penmaur and she were together when I saw them last; what has become of him, I wonder?"

"Here I am," was the reply, as that gentleman, in faultless evening attire, entered the room, and at once took possession of a vacant chair near Miss Inglis.

"I am so sorry Miss Marsh is not here," said that lady regretfully. "I very much wished to introduce her to my father."

"Is Miss Marsh absent? I had not the remotest idea when we parted that she did not intend rejoining us. I am sorry also."

His voice was so calm, and his manner so entirely

easy, that Mabel was for the moment completely deceived.

"Everything has gone off very successfully, I hear, Mr. Inglis."

It was the doctor who spoke. He had only just returned from a round of visits, and hurriedly joined his guests, eager to hear all about the doings he had been prevented from witnessing.

"Capitally, capitally. Do you know, I see no reason why this line should not pay well, when it is once in full swing."

"I have not a doubt as to its doing so. There will doubtless be a large share of unnecessary caution exhibited at first, here, as everywhere, we must expect that, but ultimate success is a foregone conclusion."

"Just so. There must be any amount of home product in such a thoroughly agricultural district for which a more extended and readily get-at-able market should be right welcome."

"Yes, when the good folks wake up to their advantages. Many of those who are most likely to benefit in the long run, are as blind as bats now."

"I fancy that state of mind will not continue long," laughed the stranger genially. "Show your neighbours clearly that money may be made by patronizing the unsightly railway, and objections to its neighbourhood will magically disappear."

"I am not so sure. Conservatism is not dead yet, and will die hard; especially of the kind that they profess. 'Faither managed to farm his land 'ithout any new-fangled notions, and what were good enough for 'e, 'ill do for we,' will be the rallying cry in a good many quarters, for the railway as well as for machinery, I fancy."

"Then you, who are more enlightened, must do what

you can to wake them up!"

"We shall try, you may be sure. Our young townsman has given evidence of possessing a good supply of grit, I am glad to find. You are pleased with the method in which he has done his duty?"

"You refer to Peardon, I suppose? Yes, he is a fine

young fellow, very fine."

"I invited him to join us this evening, mamma. You would have found room for Zedekiah, I know."

"Why did he not come?"

"I can reply to that question better than the doctor, I fancy, Mrs. Tremaine. I asked him to get out an estimate for me if he could spare the time. He is deep in it at this moment I guarantee. Though the morning would have done."

"Oh papa, that was too bad of you," said Mabel

reproachfully.

"Was it, my dear? Well, well, I'll make it up to him some time."

"Who may this interesting individual happen to be?" questioned Mr. Hayton of his companion.

"One of my brother's schoolfellows, who is now in the employ of Mr. Inglis. You will be sure to meet him before long."

"If Zedekiah Peardon does not make his mark before many years are over I shall be very much astonished," continued the Doctor. "I could see long before he left school that there was the making of a clever fellow in the lad."

"I remember," interposed Mr. Marsh dryly, "that you were everlastingly trying to shield him from blame."

"Because I could not help seeing that he got more than his fair share, old friend."

"A matter of opinion."

"Lily," whispered Violet as her sister passed her, "tell papa not to ask for Zennie, will you?"

"Very well."

"So you have promised that your daughter may return home with us, Mr. Marsh, my little girl tells me. It is very kind of you, and I will undertake to see that her visit is a pleasant one;" said Mr. Inglis as the party rose from the supper table and prepared to separate.

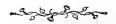
"It appears to me that the kindness is all on your side. But I believe I did say she should go. If Miss Inglis finds their natures are not compatible she must send her home again, that's all. Good-night. Goodnight, Tremaine; don't fill Zedekiah Peardon's head with too many ambitious notions when you meet him next."

"A moment, Mr. Marsh," said Charles Penmaur; "I may as well walk with you to the gate. You are not yearning for my companionship, I suppose, Hayton?" he added in a low voice.

" Not I!"

When Violet, after listening for her mother's step, at length heard her parents' bedroom door open that night, her slight white clad figure ran swiftly along the landing, and entering the room noiselessly lest she should disturb the sleeping baby, she clasped her arms round her mother's neck, and whispered, with dancing eyes—

"Just one extra good kiss, mamma darling, because I am so happy; so very very happy;" and bounded away, silently as she had come.



## CHAPTER XIX.

#### TRUE LOVE LORD OF ALL.

"I've a crow to pick with you, madam," exclaimed Mr. Marsh angrily, as he entered the breakfast room on the following morning.

Zenobia looked very fair and womanly, in her plain, but perfectly fitting, white morning dress, and a slight timidity, induced by the anticipated rebuke, gave her manner an added, and somewhat unusual charm, as she questioned—

"What is the matter, father?"

"As if I could possibly be referring to anything but your unpardonable treatment of Mr. Penmaur! I wonder what you mean by such conduct?"

"How has Mr. Penmaur told you I treated him?"

"How? Why that you refused, and in a thoroughly insulting manner, to be his wife! What do you want I should like to know?"

"I deny the insult, father. It is he who was insulting."

"I prefer to believe his version," was the cold reply, "and mark my word young lady, fret and fume as you please, I have got to be obeyed in this matter. You must, and shall marry him, and that before very long. Do you hear?"

"Yes father I hear, but I scarcely think you quite mean what you say!"

"Not mean it? You will find that I am in deadly earnest, I promise you."

"I can also be in earnest if necessity arises, father, and must be, when it is a question of such vital

importance to myself. I dare not obey you. No power on earth shall make me Mr. Penmaur's wife."

"It shall not? You sit there and dare to calmly defy me?" Mr. Marsh started from his seat, and with crimson face and starting eyeballs, thundered, "Then I say you shall. I'll not leave you one single loophole of escape. I must be obeyed, and I will be obeyed—"

"Father, hear me."

"Hold your tongue," he shouted. "A nice pass things are coming to, when chits of girls coolly defy their natural guardians at this rate!"

"Father, do not get angry, please. But indeed, indeed I dare not obey you on this point. It would

mean nothing less than life-long misery."

"Misery! Rot! Don't argue. I'll not listen to you.

Get out of my sight. Ugh! you'll drive me frantic with your high-faluting nonsense! Misery to be a rich man's idolized wife!"

Truly the angry man appeared to be already half frenzied as he stormed up and down the room after his daughter left him. The unfortunate lads in the school-room, would have good reason to remember the day after the railway opening, with quite as vivid though far

less pleasant a memory as that of the event itself!

"Bless us an' save us missy! what for goodness sake have 'ce been a doing now? Master's carrying on all's one as if he was mazed. I declare to goodness he is!"

"You are right Lyddy. But I can't think why he has got into such a passion because I do not like Mr. Penmaur."

"That's what all the tantivy's about, is it? I thought so much, I just thought so much. He wants you to marry thickee gent, and you say no? eh? is that it?"

"Yes I do say 'no' undoubtedly, and shall continue

to say no whatever happens."

"Well, well," murmured the old servant thoughtfully; "You'm a queer chield as ever I see, always was queer, for the matter of that. I don't know but what you'm in the right o't howsomever, this ere time."

"Lyddy I am certain; certain without a single doubt

that I am doing right."

"Eh well! I'm sorry for 'ee then, fey, I be that! Maister's got an uncommon queer way o' being determined hisself, nobody knows that better'n you do. So I'm afeared you'll have a hard fight for 't!"

While talking, Lydia had been busily passing to and fro, from pantry to kitchen, fetching the necessary articles for the morning's cooking, while Zenobia prepared fruit, and steeped the saffron for cake, now the latter said pleadingly—

"Lyddy sit down just a minute, do there's a dear, I must have someone to talk to, and you, who knew my darling mother so well, all about her happy girlhood, and suffering married life, will listen patiently, won't

you?"

"Eh, my dear chield. Listen! I will that, and help 'ee too, if so be as I can anyhow;" and Lydia, smoothing her apron, seated herself obediently, prepared for a recital of her young mistress's difficulties, and to give, if possible, advice as well as heartfelt sympathy.

But Zenobia had scarcely commenced speaking, when both were startled by a tremendous rat-tat-tat on the front door knocker, which resounded through the house, and brought Lyddy instantly to her feet.

"Bless us, an' save us," she exclaimed; "Who for goodness' sake can that be, a knocking the place down a'most at this time o' day!"

<sup>&</sup>quot; Pll go Lyddy."

"No you won't do no sech thing! bide here this minute! I know my duty better'n that. Like as not it's the grand folk fro' Plymouth come to see 'ee."

Pushing the girl aside, and hastily tying on a clean apron as she went, Lyddy hurried to the door, and presently Zenobia heard Mabel's clear, emphatic voice

enquiring for herself.

"There now, didn't I say 'twas they?" cried Lyddy triumphantly when she returned. "Go your ways in; they'm a fine pair as ever I see, yon' father and daughter."

"Is Mr. Inglis come as well?"

"Iss sure!"

"Here she is, papa!" exclaimed Mabel Inglis when Zenobia joined them, "this is my new friend, and

you will be obliged to like her, remember!"

"Good-morning Miss Marsh. This daughter of mine is a terrible tyrant," Mr. Inglis said laughing. "In this case however I do not anticipate experiencing any great difficulty in obeying orders."

"What became of you last night?" queried Mabel, "you disappointed us all at supper."

Zenobia flushed painfully, as she replied, "I was very disappointed at being obliged to absent myself, but it was not my fault."

"Mr. Marsh is engaged, I suppose," said Mr. Inglis, "I should have enjoyed a further talk with him if it

had been possible."

"He is in school at present. I could summon him in a moment though."

"No, no, it's not worth while to do that, we have a very short time at our disposal, but my daughter wished you to join us in a drive; are you at liberty?"

"I should enjoy it of all things. How kind of

you!" was the eager reply. "But"—she hesitated, "it is hardly fair to desert Lyddy in the morning, so I am afraid I must say no. It is the busiest time of the day, you see."

"It was Lyddy who opened the door for us, was

it not?" cried Mabel.

" Yes"

"Then make up your mind to come, I am going

to speak to her myself, may I?"

"Of course you may. And I don't think there is a chance of her raising any difficulty, but is that a reason why I should impose on her good-nature?" was the laughing reply. "However, I will call her in to answer for herself."

"Go for a ride? Why bless the chield, of course you can go, what's to prevent 'ee?" was Lyddy's unceremonious reply to the young visitor's question.
"Only duty, Lyddy, there is so much to be done

this morning."

"Tan-ni-by! What next I wonder? What's to prevent some o' the things being left if need be till you come back? You baint going bide away all day I s'pose?"

"Hardly," she laughed.

"Then for goodness sake put on your hat, and don't keep folks waiting no longer."

"We are contemplating taking your young mistress home with us for a short time," remarked Mr. Inglis as Zenobia obediently departed.

"I be main glad to hear that, sir, now that I be," Lyddy replied emphatically. "A change is just what my maid wants more'n anything just now, and I was about fast as to how her was to hev it. Ay! I declare to goodness it's a shame for me to be so unbelieving at this time o' day! Her blessed mother would just 'a prayed about it, an then rested, sure that what was best would 'a come; now I baint like that, more's the pity."

"You love her, and are anxious for her welfare however, I am glad to see, and are willing to spare her to us?"

"Iss fay. I'd a heap rather her was away than home just now, and that's true as Gospel. Her's coming, so I'll rin back to my kitchen. I'll see that her's ready to go when you want her, no fear."

"Papa says we must return on Friday," said

Mabel, "that only gives you two days."

"Lawks a massy, that's short notice, but I'll keep my word, see if I don't!"

When Mr. Marsh, shortly after Zenobia and her friends had left the house, entered the kitchen in search of her, he was met by Lyddy, of whose tongue he had a wholesome dread, with a stern rebuke for his violent conduct in the morning.

"I maun speak," she said solemnly, "if so be you'm my master or no—you'm treating that there precious

chield too bad for anything, you be that!"

"How so, I wonder? And who gave you the right of interference? I am only insisting on obedience for her own good. When or where is she likely to have such another opportunity of marrying really well?"

"But laws a massy, if the chield herself don't think it a good chance no how, what on earth deth it matter to anybody else?"

"It is not your place to interfere, Lydia. You take too much on yourself, far too much."

"Do I? Then let me tell 'ee I mean to take a little more before I'll see the chield of my late blessed missus made miserable, because her refuses to

marry a man her can't respect, let alone love. So that's the truth. You did yer level best to ruin the poor dear boy's life; no thanks to 'ee that you didn't succeed—now you'm trying the same game on with the poor maid. Shame on 'ee, master!"

Angry tears were in her eyes, and a quiver in her voice as she ceased, but Mr. Marsh did not wait to hear the final words. Dashing out of the house with a violent exclamation, he remained for some time pacing excitedly up and down the garden path, while his assistant struggled with refractory boys within doors, until the noon recess was hailed with a sigh of intense relief by all concerned.

\* \* \* \*

Violet Tremaine went about her multifarious duties in the busy household that morning with a song in her heart, which every now and again found vent in words. Meeting her as she ran from room to room, making beds, and dusting busily, her mother said—

"So my little girl is very happy, is she?"

Violet dropped her duster and replied with an ecstatic hug-

"Yes, Mammy dear; but don't say anything to anybody, will you? Let you and me keep our own counsel just yet."

"Very well." Mrs. Tremaine smiled as she turned away, but there were tears glistening in her eyes as she mused—

"It is odd to think of the child with a lover of her own, although natural, I suppose; she is no longer a child in any but her parents' eyes."

Lily, who had not been enlightened, in words, at least, as to the source of her sister's overflowing happiness, shrugged her plump shoulders, and

remarked vaguely to Ted, when he applied to her for help in some repairs his fishing tackle needed, "that she thought love was a kind of disease some people had to pass through, like catching measles or something of the same sort."

"Eh Lily, what did you say? Who's got

measles?"

"I didn't say anybody had! You should listen when people are talking to you. There's nothing so important as the matter in hand to you though, is there, old boy? That's right now; be careful not to break it again, mind. Look at the time, if I don't run away those chicks will never get out for their walk."

And before many minutes had passed, with the little ones clustering closely round, to catch every word, she was leading her charges towards the Castle green, embodying her perplexing thoughts in a fairy story for their delectation.

When the family met at dinner, the elder sister was exceedingly quiet, and decidedly absent in manner; and as the meal, which had been somewhat delayed, drew to a close, she was evidently listening intently. Presently a peal at the front door bell made her start nervously, and when Susan, after admitting someone, announced—"There is a gentleman in the consulting room wishes to see you, sir," she flushed scarlet, and leaving the table abruptly, sought the shelter of her own room.

"What's the matter with Vi, I wonder?" queried Daisy. "She never gave me the second helping of pudding I wanted."

"Didn't she? Well never mind, here it is."

"Vi's turned cranky all at once," remarked Sep gravely; "she's been awfully queer all day."

"Nonsense," replied his mother sharply. "You are going to be late at school again. No, there is no time for more; you must hurry as it is; look at that clock."

\* \* \* \*

"So your desires are still turned in the direction of my little girl, Mr. Hayton? And you think you can make her happy because she loves you?"

"Yes, Doctor Tremaine, I really do think so. If I did not, much as I love Violet, I should hesitate to ask for her hand."

"Come, I like that. I always did feel a certain contempt for any fellow who could continue to plead for what had been definitely denied him. However, now let us see about ways and means, supposing I consider your proposal favourably, what sort of nest can you provide? Even Vi cannot exist entirely on love, you will find, small though she is." The doctor smiled as he spoke, and the young man, who had experienced a somewhat uncomfortable quarter of an hour under the avalanche of questions to which he had been subjected, felt relieved. "I am not a rich man—far from it," the doctor continued.

"That makes not the slightest difference," exclaimed the young man eagerly; "it is Violet I want. My salary will prove amply sufficient for our needs, I feel sure."

"I am glad, unfeignedly glad to hear you say that; young men now-a-days usually want such a large margin for their private pocket money, and—" he paused a moment, then finished the sentence by saying slowly—"I had the impression that you were one of that class yourself."

"Perhaps I used to be; but you were wise, I see it

now, in forbidding Violet's correspondence with me for a time, until my prospects were on a firmer basis. It is very probable that I should not have striven so hard to rise, had your consent been easily won."

"Your persistence shows that you possess the

elements of abiding success, I hope."

"May it prove so! One thing is certain—this period of probation has shown me the depth and strength of my love. Had I not been genuinely in earnest, the desire to win my darling would have died before now, having nothing but memory to feed on; but instead of doing so, it has grown steadily stronger, until now I could not bear to lose the hope."

"Well it may grow to even greater vigour, my boy, as far as I am concerned," was the reply, as the doctor rose and extended his hand. "One thing more," he continued earnestly, "My little girl has been trained to believe that life is only worth living as it can stand the test of eternity. Marriage is a solemn relation viewed in that light. You will, I earnestly hope, help each other onward, and upward?"

The interview lasted so long that Violet, listening overhead for the sound of an opening door, wondered what they could possibly be talking about. It came at length, and bounding lightly downstairs, she intercepted her lover with the query—

"Well, what does papa say?"

"Papa says that this self-willed little girl may have her own way," said her father laughingly; coming forward and taking her hand in his own, he placed it in that of her lover, saying—

"Be good to her, Hayton. She is pretty hardy, but kindness is essential to her well-being I have found, in a very great degree."

"I think I can safely promise to be that," said the

young man, a pressed a fervent kiss on the pure forehead, shad day its dark clustering curls. Nestling in his arms Violet whispered, looking archly at her father—

"Have you not some good advice to give me as well, papa? You generally keep a large stock of that

commodity on hand, don't you?"

"Yes, you saucebox," he laughed, shaking his fist at her. "Be as kind as he may, he is a man, remember, so you will have to give up wanting so much of your own way. How will you like that?"

"Perhaps I shan't do so. We'll see what we will see!"

"Nothing like being open in announcing your intentions, I must say!" he exclaimed. "Take her out for a walk, Hayton, she won't be of much use for the next few hours, that's pretty certain; and return with her for the evening."

#### CHAPTER XX.

## AT CLOVER MOUNT

"REMEMBER your promise, Papa. You must be sure to bring Mr. Peardon back with you this evening."

"I shall do my best to obey your behest. But suppose he refuses to come? Have I permission to name my grand inducement?"

"No, oh no! Try any means but that."

The dogcart was waiting to convey Mr. Inglis to

the station, and his daughter was engaged in fixing a fresh rosebud in his buttonhole as she spoke. He very rarely left home in the morning without receiving some such decoration at her hands. The french window of the breakfast parlour stood open, and within, framed in a bower of clematis and small leaved ivy, whose tendrils were swayed gently to and fro by the fresh morning breeze, stood our bonny queen Zenobia, looking, as she felt, perfectly, blissfully happy. Three days had passed since her arrival at Clover Mount - for, as Mabel had prophesied, they travelled in company. Mr. Marsh had at the last raised various objections, but, one by one, all had been over-ruled. Lydia aiding and abetting very decidedly, determined that her "chield" should be free from worry, for a time at least-and as each passing day only served to reveal to the delighted visitor fresh sources of interest, her happiness became very apparent; not the least attraction by any means being the wealth of floral beauties by which she was surrounded.

"Good-morning, I really am off at last," called her host presently. "Don't wear yourself quite out in woodland rambles to-day; reserve a little energy for the evening, when I shall claim my reward, remember."

"And I will gladly give it," she replied. "It is a

lovely morning for your drive."

"We must teach you how to hold the ribbons. I mean you to take me to the station before you leave us. Mabel often does so."

"And is staying at home now, because I am here! That is too bad!"

"Nonsense," exclaimed Mabel, running up the grassy slope. "I am going to the greenhouse; come long, let us try how many blooms we can wheedle

Palmer into cutting. I intend that the drawing-room shall be quite transformed by the time the gentlemen arrive."

"It is great fun to hear you pleading for permission to cut flowers from your own gardener," said Zenobia, laughing at the remembrance of one or two scenes she had witnessed between mistress and man.

"I daresay it does appear absurd," assented Mabel, laughing also, "but I assure you Palmer is capable of seriously resenting any other action on my part. I really believe he would give Papa notice, much as he admires him, if I attempted to do as I pleased.

There he is; now for it. Come, you must help me;
I am bent on making large demands for once."

"Good-morning Palmer; I should think you are

particularly happy to-day? Everything looks so

particularly nappy to-day? Everything looks so fresh, and smells so sweet after last night's rain."

"Iss, iss, rain were right enough, but there's bin a main lot o' slugs crawling out, drat mun. Marnin', Missie, you've got a garden to home, I s'pose?"

"Yes; only a very small one, however. Yours is lovely," Zenobia replied. "I am never tired of admiring its perfect and a."

admiring its perfect order."

"Ay, ay, it might be waur, I maun say that. Now there's the very next place to this o' our'n; I'd think shame to mysen for ever if I were Dicky Daw. They've actually a got dashells a'growing 'mong the shrubs theirselves; think o' that!"

"He must be careless!" cried Mabel, in shocked "See, I have my basket, and here are the scissors; cut me as many blooms as you can possibly spare, especially roses and heliotrope; I want to decorate the rooms very gaily indeed to-day."

"Eh dear, Missy, I believe you think flowers grow just for you to cut mun, and kill mun."

"No, Palmer, really I don't! I love them, and never throw one away until its beauty is quite gone. Mr. Peardon is coming to-night;" she whispered, "you like him, don't you?"

"Ay, ay, he's well enough. He's blest wi' sense over an' above most o' the young fellows now-a-days. He've got a head on 's shoulders, he hev that. They do say—the women-folk up to th' house—that you come fro' the same parts that he deth, missie," he continued, turning to Zenobia, "be they in the right o't?"

"Yes, we were children together," she replied.

"Then—I mun say it—your town turns out some youngsters above common, it deth that!"

"Why you are actually paying compliments, Palmer. I never heard you guilty of doing such a thing before!" cried Mabel, clapping her hands.

"Now Missy, what should an old man like me hev to do wi' compliments, eh? There tho', you must hev yer joke, I s'pose. Wull they do for 'ee?"

"Oh what beauties," exclaimed Zenobia delightedly.

"Yes, are they not? I want just a few more fern fronds, though, there will hardly be enough green, Palmer. And—do you think it would injure those two giant ferns to come in just for one night? Please don't say no," she continued pleadingly. "I have a very special reason for asking."

"It'll take more'n a week for they to get over sech a move," he grumbled, "but-eh well, I'll bring 'em in, if so be as you'll tell me where you want 'em put."

"That is good of you. Come along, Zennie, we have our work cut out for the next two hours, and then for a ramble. I have not shown you the very prettiest bit of our wood yet."

Soon after six o'clock that evening the drawing-room door opened to admit our old friend Zed, looking every inch what he really was—a true nature's gentleman. Strictly speaking, he would never be handsome, his features were cast in too rugged a mould, but every year added to the attraction he possessed without knowing it for a growing circle of friends—that of having the power not to merely simulate but really feel a keen interest in the well being of those by whom he was surrounded. As a lad he was somewhat absent and self-centred; but, insensibly, Mrs. Marsh acted beneficially on that side of his nature by rousing into activity all the latent chivalry he possessed, no small supply; this had never slept again, and, during these weeks in which he had known that his devoted, worshipping love was accepted and returned, a kind of instinct had awakened which told him that the man Zenobia Marsh honoured with her love and confidence must look, as well as feel, the gentleman.

He advanced leisurely into the room, stopping now to smell a rose, or examine a fern; presently a photograph caught his attention—yes, it represented very faithfully the dear old castle, and immediately his thoughts flew back to the never-to-be-forgotten evening, when his heart, under the influence of terror, had sent a flood of passionate words to his lips.

The large square window at the farther end of the long room looked very attractive; at each side a giant fern raised its long handsome fronds proudly, while a miniature fountain gurgled in the centre, serving to enclose a most charming recess. Smiling to himself he sauntered towards it.

"I never saw this room so richly decorated with

plants before," he thought. "Miss Inglis has apparently been trying experiments, and the result is a complete success."

There appeared to be no one present, but, as he neared the open window, a slight rustle behind one of the branching ferns caught his ear. Stepping quickly forward, he saw that the lounge within the recess was occupied by a woman's form. Something in the turn of the head—she was looking towards the garden—set his heart beating wildly. Surely he could not be mistaken—it must be Miss Marsh! Yet, how came she to be here, of all places?

Hearing a step, Zenobia turned her head, and sprang up, exclaiming—

"You here already, Zed? Why, I have been watching for the dogcart. When and how did you arrive?"

"Nearly a quarter of an hour since; we drove round the other way. But you—how long have you been here? I could hardly believe my eyes just now."

He had taken possession of the hand she held towards him, and was devouring hungrily with his eyes every feature of her beautiful face as he spoke.

Zenobia did not lower her own, though perfectly conscious of the story they told; so, for a full moment, the two stood looking their love. At length—

"Won't you sit down?" she said, with a happy laugh. "I came back with Mr. Inglis and Mabel, so have been here three whole days; did they not tell you?"

"Not a word; and, do you know, I had a narrow escape of missing this!"

"How? I should have been disappointed," :

"Would you? My darling, my darling! I may call you so?"

"Yes, if you wish, Zed."

"If I wish! Good gracious; suppose I had persisted in refusing Mr. Inglis' invitation, what I should have missed!"

"If you had 'To-morrow will bring another day, will it not?"

"Perhaps; I would rather secure this to-day, however! I could not imagine why Mr. Inglis was so unusually persistent in overcoming every obstacle. He would not leave me a loop-hole of escape. Yet I really ought to have been busy late to-night."

"That is good! So you actually had to be dragged here against your will!" She tried to pout, but it was of no use, her smiling lips would not take pout-

ing curves.

"If I had only known what was in store, the train would not have borne me fast enough. Bless me, how was it possible I should guess when Mr. Inglis was talking all the time of machinery improvements! How could he?"

Zenobia laughed softly—"Mr. Inglis is not in love, you should remember," she said.

"But he was one day. I don't believe the glamour will ever wear off with me. Love and lovers—the real thing that is—will always be full of charm."

"Others have said the same before now, I fancy." Her glance was so arch, that it made him stoop and kiss the sweet upturned face.

"It was awfully tantalizing being at Dunheved yet so seldom getting even a distant glimpse of you. You little thought how I hung round the house at night."

"Did you? That was very foolish, for I know

you had more than enough exercise during your long busy day."

"Nevertheless I committed the folly. My darling, only think, I have never yet even heard you say you love me!"

"You know it right well, so what need of words?" she replied.

The lovelight in her beautiful eyes was brilliant enough to turn any man's head when directed full at himself, so Zedekiah may be pardoned for his next action. Kneeling passionately at her feet and kissing fervently the white hand which rested on her knee, he said—

"I vow here, before God and you, my queen, most pure and lovely of all women, to be henceforward your own true knight as long as life shall last. Wherever I may be, or whatever difficulties may lie in wait to try us, the thought of our holy love will be powerful enough to ward off all forms of evil from my own heart, and strengthen me to fight against its deadening influence over others."

His rugged face upturned towards her own, and touched by the glowing sunset which flooded their recess, was positively illuminated and transformed, by the strength and energy of his passion.

With tears of deep feeling shining in her eyes, Zenobia stooped and imprinted a lingering kiss on his forehead; the first any lover had ever received from her lips. It was her own eloquent seal to their joint compact.

He remained perfectly still at her feet for some moments, gazing silently at the sweet brave face, then said—

"I shall go armed with the strength of ten henceforth. Nothing can take from me courage and hope, whatever occurs. Oh Zenobia, if only women, as a whole, believed firmly in their own power, and lived up to their privileges, there would be more Sir Galahads, and fewer Launcelots in this world of ours."

"Perhaps so; yet it often seems that foolishness and frivolity recommend themselves, before purity and innate truthfulness."

They were silent for a time, each feeling almost too blissfully content for speech. Presently, however, Mr. Inglis and his daughter crossed the lawn, and were apparently approaching their retreat; so Zedekiah said—

"Have I permission now to tell your father of my hope?"

"If you do it will only make him even more angry with me," she replied sadly. "And yet—yes, do as you please; silence, under the circumstances, appears a cowardly course to take, but, dear, we must be prepared for a decided refusal, and be content to wait."

"So you will not defy him? I could make a home for you at once, my darling. Not a very grand one, it is true, but comfortable, and I am sure it would be happy."

"No, no, Zed; you do not mean that. I don't believe you would even take me if I consented! Right is right, and right plainly says 'wait' in this instance."

"Good evening, Mr. Peardon," said Mabel, coming smilingly forward. "Has the surprise been a success?"

"That it has, Miss Inglis! How shall I thank you? I can scarcely realize, even yet, who is here with me!"

"Come to dinner now then, both of you,-if you

are not too much in the clouds to attend to so mundane a duty as eating,"—she whispered to Zenobia. "You will perhaps find, during the course of the meal, that your surroundings are genuinely matter of fact, Mr. Peardon."

"I have been thinking about your request, Peardon," remarked Mr. Inglis, when they were seated at table. "Do you candidly consider it my duty to give that young fellow another trial?"

"As to what is your duty, Sir, I dare not presume to dictate. To reinstate him would be an act of

pure kindness on your part."

"I must confess that he does not deserve such consideration, the young rascal."

"Who are you speaking of? Anyone I know,

papa?"

"Yes, you knew him, my dear, both of you, in fact. You said he was a school-fellow of yours, I think, Peardon?"

"Yes. You remember Bert Hocking, Zenobia?"

"Indeed I do, very vividly. I was rather hard on him in those days, I fear; all the more severe in my youthful criticisms because of his good looks. He was such a selfish lad, and often got off doing his own work by using those handsome eyes of his. What have you heard about him? I understood he had completely vanished."

"So he appeared to have done," observed Mr. Inglis. "However, Peardon tells me he turned up again this morning with a pitiful story, and wants me to find him a place in the works."

"And can you, papa?"

"So you do not advise me to refuse? I am strongly tempted to do so, I confess."

"Perhaps he will have learned more sense. I think

you might give him a chance of redeeming himself, papa dear."

"That is your opinion, eh? Yet you were as much annoyed as any of us by the young fellow's foolish action."

"True; but after all he was not wholly, nor, I am inclined to think, most to blame. The principal onus, it is my firm conviction, lay elsewhere."

"Well, Peardon, have your way, my consent is conditional on your keeping an eye on him, remember. He will be in your department, so you will have little difficulty in doing that. I shall take care to let him know who he has to thank for his berth."

"I don't anticipate much trouble with him; judging from appearances, he has sunk into real want, poor lad."

"Well, after all, these headstrong youngsters always have to learn by experience; so don't waste too much sympathy over the young scamp. I hope he will give us no further trouble," and Mr. Inglis turned the conversation abruptly into a political groove, for just at that time party feeling ran hot and high.

While the gentlemen talked Zenobia remained a silent but interested listener. She took mechanically the food set before her, but certainly without noticing what it was. Outside, the shadows were lengthening on the sloping lawn, and beneath a group of grand chestnut trees it was almost dark. Birds flitted restlessly from branch to branch, before nestling for the night in their cosy cradles, and, borne on the breeze from its home in an unnoticed corner, the delicious perfume of sweet alyssum mingled with that of rose and jasmine, came through the open window, flooding the room with fragrance.

Her heart was full to overflowing of blissful content, as, meeting now and again a tender glance from Zed's kind dark eyes, she smiled softly in response. What though difficulties, and even a long and weary separation, might be in store for them? Nothing mattered, she thought, as long as their own hearts continued steadfast.

Mabel Inglis could scarcely contain her joy as she watched the pair; knowing herself to have been the factor instrumental in bringing about their present

happiness.

"It is such a glorious night that I propose we all go for a stroll. There is no necessity for you to return until the very last train, Peardon, so there is plenty of time;" said Mr. Inglis presently. "Charming as you ladies have made the drawing-room, nature is more attractive at this time of the year."

"My drawing-room has served its purpose right well, so I am content for it to waste its sweetness for the remainder of the evening," laughed Mabel. "Is it quite impossible for you to remain until the morning for once, Mr. Peardon?"

"Quite, I fear, seeing there is no train until seven, and I must be at the works by six prompt."

"If that is the case you should not remain very late to-night then. Remember the old adage about burning the candle at both ends."

Zed laughed heartily as he replied-

"I hope you will not constitute me a hard-worked martyr in your own mind, Miss Inglis, because of that admission. I verily believe hard work suits my constitution."

"Certainly you don't look as though anything in your mode of life disagreed with you," she said. "I should consider you the type of a perfectly healthy,

vigorous Englishman. Zenobia, what wraps shall I bring you down?"

"I am coming with you."

"You are the very kindest friend any girl ever had, I verily believe," Zenobia said as they ran upstairs. "I cannot attempt to tell you how happy I am."

"And I am content with the evidence of my own eyes," replied Mabel, and am so glad for you, dear; there is something satisfactory in an engagement like yours."

"It will not be all smooth sailing for us, I know that. Father will be angry when he hears."

"Why should he be? Papa says Mr. Peardon will most probably be a rich man before he dies. He is very clever at his business, and often makes some discovery which materially improves the machine on which he may be engaged at the time. He patented the last, and it is likely to prove a good thing."

"I know Zed is clever—he always was; but my father has set his mind on another match for me, and nothing I can say will make him change it."

"Then you will have to wait, that is all. 'All things come to him who waits,' the proverb says, so I hope it will prove true for you."

"I know we must, and am not going to let that fact make me miserable, I assure you."

"Where is that dog, Mabel?" questioned her father, as the girls joined them. "It will do him good to go for a run."

"Not far away, I expect." Taking a small whistle from her belt, she blew it, and in a moment the huge St. Bernard came bounding towards them from the direction of the stables. His delight at finding what he was wanted for, became somewhat overpowering until his master said sternly—

"Down sir, down this moment; no more of that To heel. Do you hear?" Instantly he quieted down, following demurely in their rear, until, as they neared the wood, he started on a prowl by himself.

"Come along, papa, you and I will be company for each other and leave those two arcadians to entertain themselves in their own fashion. I want to hear something more about that foolish young Hocking;" said Mabel, taking possession of her father's arm.

"You are an arrant matchmaker, my dear! How long does it take you to scent out an attachment?"

"Nonsense, Papa; it is dowagers who make matches. This was easy enough to discover, and is a thoroughly satisfactory love story into the bargain. But about your clerk?"

"My dear, I know little more than you heard. If the girl had been any other than that feather-brained Sybil, I should not have so easily consented to give him a second trial, I own. The foolish lad appears to have become really attached to her, and believed she meant all she said. They had filled each other's heads with a grand lot of stories, I'll be bound."

"Do you know papa—I may be wrong because no one has actually said so—but I feel almost certain that Mr. Marsh wishes Zennie to marry Sybil's brother."

"Bless my soul, what makes you imagine that?"

"Several things. He would not spend much time in a quiet place like Dunheved for no purpose; and I certainly noticed what good terms he appeared to be on with Mr. Marsh."

"If you are right there are rocks ahead for those

two. Penmaur will stick at few things, I fancy, to gain his ends, when he is really in earnest. Turn the next corner, Peardon. We pass the station by returning that way."

"You will come out on Saturday evening and spend Sunday with us, Mr. Peardon?" said Mabel, as they shook hands at the station.

"How can I refuse? Nothing within my power to control shall prevent me, you may be sure. Good-night, my darling," he whispered, holding both Zenobia's hands. "I shall write to Mr. Marsh before I sleep, and we must both pray that the clouds may clear."

There was no time for reply before he was whirled away into the darkness.

# CHAPTER XXI.

### SUNSHINE AND SHADOW.

As the ensuing Saturday proved to be a really beautiful day, Mabel proposed at breakfast that, instead of returning as he usually did on Saturdays, at noon, Mr. Inglis should remain in town, Zenobia and herself join him there for lunch, and all spend the afternoon at Mount Edgecombe. "We may not have many more such days," she said, "and it will be delightful in the park."

"Very well. That is not at all a bad idea, my dear. But if you come, don't start later than the II-30 train. I will be at the terminus; then we can lunch and get across before there is a great run on the boats."

When the two girls alighted from the train at the appointed time, they found not only Mr. Inglis in waiting, but he was accompanied, as Zenobia had privately hoped might be the case, by Zedekiah Peardon

"Come, this is capital!" exclaimed Mabel gleefully, as Zed quietly, but with an amusing air of proprietor-ship, took possession of her companion. "I hardly dare hope that you would think of asking him papa," she whispered as they walked away.

"Don't imagine that you have absorbed all the sympathy for lovers that may be in the air, young lady. When my eyes have once been opened, it is possible that my sight may be as keen as your own,"

was the reply."

"Shall you be able to remain with us all day?"

questioned Zenobia of her companion.
"I intend doing so, you may be very sure; and all to-morrow as well, so am anticipating a delightful treat."

"You have been to Mount Edgecombe before, of course?"

"No, I have not. Somehow I have always been too busy to include in pleasure trips, since coming to Plymouth. I am very glad of it now, we can form an opinion together.

"So we can," she replied, meeting frankly his

earnest gaze.

"Are you glad that Mr. Inglis invited me?" he murmured, pressing closer the hand which rested on his arm.

"I should have been very disappointed if he had not," was the emphatic reply.

"Do you live far from here?" she questioned, looking about her, as they passed rapidly through

the long wide street, not pausing for a glance at even the most attractive shop windows.

"We will come in by ourselves some morning, and have a regular round," said Mabel, "gentlemen always profess to hate shop gazing. There are some very good ones in Plymouth, however, I assure you, which are well worth a visit."

"A good half hour's walk," was Zed's reply. "I should like to take you over the works some time."

"And I should like to see where you live. Can you not invite Mabel and I up to tea one day?"

He laughed heartily as he replied-

"There would hardly be room for us all to turn round in my small quarters, and what a fluster my old landlady would get into! Such an event would excite the whole neighbourhood!"

"Then I think we must come," was the laughing reply. "I am very fond of giving innocent pleasure"

"That is why you took pity on my lonely friendlessness, ch?"

"Perhaps so, seeing that I could please myself at the same time."

Such a pleasant day they had; one which, in the memory of two of the four at least, would stand out all their lives as a time of perfect, cloudless joy. The beautiful park stood in no need of the glamour their mutual happiness threw over it, however, to be a most attractive resort, as the presence of many another party testified. It is seldom that so small a domain combines such varied attractions of hill and valley, wood and water. Wander where they would, fresh charms appealed to the eyes for delighted appreciation, and, from every eminence, the waters of Plymouth Sound became visible, dotted here and there with vessels

large and small, and of very varying uses; here a tiny white-winged pleasure yacht sailed along in close proximity to a stately man-of-war; there a huge American liner approached the shore, her decks dark with myriads of figures eagerly scanning the nearing harbour; and all glistened and shone in the brilliant sunshine which touched the restless waves into ever changing beauty.

"Our companions are quite out of sight," said Mr. Inglis with an amused smile, as, after having for some time pointed out various objects of interest to Zenobia, whose delight it was a pleasure to witness, Mabel and himself had lagged a little behind. "I shall rest here awhile; this arch has been built to accommodate elderly gentlemen like myself, I imagine; I have hardly had time to glance at to-day's paper yet, either. I bought another of Dickens' works for you this morning: here it is."

"Oh papa, you are good. That will be delightful."

While Mr. Inglis was immersed in the day's news, and his daughter becoming rapidly acquainted with "David Copperfield," the lovers had sought the shade of a small copse, whose grand trees deserved to be considered genuine forest veterans. The little wood served to shelter the rabbit warren from some of the blustering winds which often held high revel over this exposed domain. Here, at the root of a gigantic oak, whose sturdy limbs had grown to their present strength by contact with many a gale of wind and rain, Zed proposed that they should scat themselves.

As she obeyed, Zenobia shook her head gravely, saying—

"It was terribly rude of us to run away, I fear, but this is a very nice arrangement." "Nice is not the word at all! It's glorious!" exclaimed her companion. "I never expected to experience such happiness, I can tell you! Confess now, you little thought in those old days at school, that even then you were the only girl in the world for me?"

"No indeed;" she laughed, and shook her head. "Had I thought about it at all, I should have said, most likely, that it was mother you loved, and were kind to me for her sake."

"Loved Mrs. Marsh? I did indeed! Almost with worshipping adoration. No one knows, or can ever know, what she did for me. She gave me, for one thing, hope and courage when both were well-nigh dead. If I had never known her—I may be wrong—but I truly believe that the Fatherhood of God would have been a dead letter to me. She made me feel it for myself, a living, blessed fact. Oh, my darling, you were indeed blessed in your mother, if other things were then, and many still are, hard."

"I don't know for certain, of course; no one does, I suppose,—but I sincerely believe that it would be an utter impossibility for me to commit any flagrant sin," she replied slowly. "I seem instinctively to do everything from the standpoint of what she would like. Nothing impure could live for a moment when tried by that test. So you see that, if I am good, no praise is due to me for the fact; less to me than with most good people. My clear memory of mother's own exceeding purity is like a mirror, in which threatening harm is reflected, and a warning given me to beware. I thought at first God was bitterly ernel in taking her from me; but now I can see the real kindness. I am stronger than any other method of training could have made me, just as this oak tree is

strong in root and branch, because many of the winds which have blown upon it were adverse ones. I am so glad she has helped you as well, Zed. How pleased she must be now."

Her tone was low, and so deeply in earnest, that Zed almost felt speech from him would be desecration, so contented himself by kissing softly the hand he held. Such a capable hand; one that, young as it was, had already accomplished good work, and would be powerful to do much more in days to come.

They were still for a time; so still and silent that an inquisitive little wren hopped nearer and nearer to them, looking with his piercing bright eyes at those two very big "babes in the wood," contemplating perhaps, the labour it would necessitate should they require covering with leaves.

At length the young man, rousing himself, drew from his waistcoat pocket a tiny parcel, which contained a plain hoop of gold set with a single row of pearls. Not a very costly gift, perhaps, but thoroughly well suited to its destined wearer. He did not speak, but slipping it gently on to the girl's finger, kissed it when in place, then murmured in a low voice, still holding her fingers to his lips—

"God—make me worthy, in heart and life, of the treasure I have won."

"And give me wisdom and clear-sightedness to become to him a helpmeet in the truest sense," replied Zenobia, in the same low tone.

"Why Zed, what have you been doing?" she exclaimed, at sight of the ring. "Now it is very foolish of you to spend money in this way. Did you imagine that I should not remain true to my promise without some visible sign of my subjugation?"

"No," he laughed, "no such unworthy suspicion as that moved me. I know that Zenobia Marsh is in the habit of keeping her word. But the day when I may place another, and even more precious symbol there, is, I fear, so far distant, that I needed some comfort."

"You have shown good taste," she said. "It is very pretty."

"Like its wearer—chaste, and pure, and constant, I thought."

Zenobia laughed merrily. "There is no doubt about your being very much in love," she cried. "I could even imagine you inscribing our names on some much enduring tree, in orthodox lover fashion."

"That is exactly what I intend doing, my queen. Not very far from here, I have been told, there are a group of cork trees."

"Are there? Then let us seek them." Zenobia rose as she spoke, and, with the old merry light in her eyes he had not seen there since the days of childhood, stood before him in her glorious beauty, saying—

"Come Sir, do you know that we are wasting time? I came here to see Mount Edgecombe, and want to carry away a mental photograph of every spot of interest."

"Wasting time, are we?" he exclaimed. "I like that! Now, I think, we have employed every moment delightfully. Why, imagine—just imagine if you can—what such a day as this means to me. Ever since early childhood I have longed in vain for some one I might love, and who would love me•in return, and have been literally starved——"

"Poor boy!" she interjected.

"Oh, you may laugh; but every word is true," he

continued. "Is it any wonder that I want to bask all the time now in the broad blessed sunlight that has come to me? It is heaven begun on earth."

Springing to his feet, he clasped the girl in his strong arms, and kissing her hungrily again and again, pressed her to his heart as though nothing should persuade him ever to loose her more.

Zenobia remained strangely passive for the first moment or two, then hid her face on his breast sobbing almost hysterically.

"My darling, my treasure," he cried, "What is it? What grieves you? Tell me!"

"Oh Zed, I cannot bear it," she sobbed. "Don't, please don't do that again. Suppose after all we should have to part? Oh, it would be so terrible."

"Never," he cried. "No earthly power shall separate us now."

"But a heavenly one might," she whispered. "There now," recovering herself, "you will be good, and so will I. Let us find those cork trees; I never saw any."

It was quite an hour later before Mr. Inglis and his daughter came at length upon the truants, who, even then, were still so much absorbed in each other's company as to be quite oblivious to the apparent rudeness of their conduct.

"Well," exclaimed Mabel in pretended offence, "I find myself singularly mistaken. I really thought we had brought Miss Marsh here, with the intention of introducing her to the beauties of Mount Edgecombe. It is very evident that she has managed to become acquainted with this island home, without our assistance, however, papa."

"Well, well, we will be lenient under the circumstances," replied that gentleman, with a twinkle in

his eye. "It is high time we were starting homewards. You think the park worth visiting, I hope?"

"It is lovely," said Zenobia enthusiastically; "I

shall never forget it."

"I imagine not!" whispered Mabel drily, "you must have got a long chapter in your love story told."

Zenobia blushed as she replied, "You have been so kind that I don't think I shall mind any amount of teasing from you. I wish you were as happy as I am."

"How do you know I am not? It is possible to have a far less indulgent lover than mine. Papa satisfies me entirely, I assure you."

"Mr. Inglis is a darling," was the reply. "Only—it's not quite the same, is it?"

Mabel laughed. "He is not Zedekiah, you are thinking, am I not right? I shall call you two 'double Z!' What a queer conjunction your names are!"

\* \* \*

"You will not go to the school to-day, I suppose Mabel," said Mr. Inglis at breakfast the following morning.

"Indeed I must, papa! Why should I stay at home? Besides, so many teachers are away just now that my presence is needed more than usually, if I resist the temptation to press our guests into the service," she continued laughingly, "I am sure that is as much as can be expected from me."

Rightly interpreting a glance from Zenobia, Zedekiah said—

"If our services would really be of use, why should we not accompany you, Miss Inglis?"

"Would you really be willing?" she said eagerly.
"Are you sure you do not mind?"
"Mind! No indeed, why should we? Both of us

would be engaged in that way at home. Why not here?"

"Then get ready at once, please. I am so glad."

"I have brought two volunteers to help fill the gaps, Mr. Carter," said Mabel brightly to the harassed superintendent, when they reached the school.

"That is the pleasantest thing I have heard

to-day," exclaimed the gentleman, as he shook hands; "so many of our best workers are away that I was seriously considering the advisability of giving a short address from the desk, and dismissing the scholars. Such a step is unnecessary now, however. Have you any choice as to the kind of class you prefer?"

"If you put Mr. Peardon in the vestry with as many boys as are without teachers, he will keep them interested, I guarantee," Mabel hastened to reply.

"Will you really? Then if Miss Marsh will combine two girls' classes, we shall be grandly provided for "

How glad Zenobia felt when she retired that night, even though her leisure had been so seriously curtailed, to be able to look back on such a satisfactory dav!

As to Zedekiah's large class, they voted him a champion teacher; he always appeared to possess a special gift for interesting lads, but that day excelled himself. Illustration after illustration, clear and vivid, crowded to his lips, and he presented them in such graphic language that his hearers listened in silent amazement. Not one of the boys would be likely to

forget in a hurry the strange gentleman, who showed so clearly to each their own especial weakness; and explained with equal distinctness where aid to conquer it might be obtained.

The gentlemen had gone to town the next morning before the post arrived, but before they started it was arranged that Zedekiah should return on the following night; so the parting was anything but doleful.

"There he is at last!" exclaimed Mabel. It was raining, so the two girls had stationed themselves at the breakfast-room window to watch, instead of, as usual, meeting the postman at the gate.

"Nothing for you, Zennie. That is strange. Two for me, and one for Papa. Why, look, it has the Dunheved post-mark! Who can his correspondent be, I wonder?"

"Has it? May I see the writing? How odd," she continued in a puzzled tone, after examining the envelope for a minute. "It is very like Mr. Simmond's, the tutor's hand. "I fear something must be wrong at home."

"Hardly, I should think. Surely if there were they would write direct to you."

"I hope Zed has heard from father this morning," said Zenobia after a short silence; "he will be very angry, I fear."

"Perhaps; though why he should I cannot understand. However, I am very glad that there is no danger of your marrying Charles Penmaur. I always had an instinctive doubt of him, and found out, some time since, that the feeling was not ungenerous, or without foundation. He is no true man. Even to see him in the company of a pure-minded girl

always makes me angry. His touch is contamination; to be the object of his regard, almost a moral taint!"

"How strongly you speak," exclaimed Zenobia. "Of course I have had no opportunity of knowing anything of his antecedents, but have always felt an unaccountable antipathy to him, which grew stronger when I found he was my suitor. I could not—could not—marry him. I told him I would rather die than do so, and, dear as life is, meant every word I said."

"I should think so! To be condemned to daily intercourse with a man such as he is would be a fate far, far worse than death!"

"I wonder what attractions I could have for him? You see I am poor, so it was not money; and there are hundreds of girls far handsomer."

"Perhaps it was your very purity fascinated him; there are men like that in plenty, I believe, who, while delighting in impurity themselves, would have the women they marry without spot or taint. As if it were possible for them, poor things, to touch pitch and not be defiled! I declare, Zennie, I should like to label men like Charles Penmaur as unclean, that those they associate with may at least know their danger."

"It seems to me—" Zenobia dropped the embroidery on which she had been working busily, and spoke slowly and thoughtfully—"that instinct tells us where it is safe to trust, and which way danger lies, if we will but consent to be guided by it."

"In some cases, true; but very frequently people appear to be minus that quality, or they deliberately disregard the warning, because some apparent good may thus be secured. How many would think that your advantage for instance lay in following the course you

have chosen? I can a little understand what makes Mr. Marsh so angry. The Penmaurs are an old family, and tolerably wealthy; and you would make an ideal *chatalaine*, with your queenly bearing, and manner so exactly suited to your name."

"What nonsense you talk, Mabel; as if I had anything to do with choosing my name. Oh dear, I wish some one had written," she continued anxiously. "I

feel convinced that something is wrong."

The day appeared to pass more slowly than any of the preceding ones, though the girls found full occupation; but each felt relieved when Mr. Inglis appeared, shaking the rain, which still fell steadily, from overcoat and umbrella; for Zenobia had infected Mabel with some of her own anxiety.

"We are eager to know the contents of this letter, papa," said the latter. "It is from Dunheved, and Zennie fears that something is amiss."

"Nonsense, nonsense; never meet trouble half way—

it is bad policy for both spirits and digestion."

Mr. Inglis shook his head laughingly as he spoke, but, after glancing at the contents of the envelope, the smile died away from his lips, and was replaced by an anxiety as keen as Zenobia's own.

"Bless my soul, that's bad; he ejaculated presently.

"Oh Mr. Inglis," said Zenobia, with white trembling lips, "What is it?"

"Your father is ill, my dear; very ill, it appears."

"Oh why, why did I not know before? It is cruel of them not to send to me direct."

"My dear, it was done in all kindness, I quite believe."

"Can I, by any means, get home to-night?"

"No; it is an impossibility, but you can make ready to start by the first train in the morning. That

means early rising, but under the circumstances you won't mind that."

"Oh no. May I know what is the matter?"

"Paralysis, I fancy. No—don't look at me like that, you poor child. He is not dead, if that is what you are fearing, nor likely to die from what I gather."

"Thank God; oh thank God," murmured the girl as she walked from the room and upstairs, letting slow merciful tears fall unheeded, as she proceeded to fold and place in her box garment after garment, in a mechanical manner.

Mabel was following her pityingly, when her father called her back, saying—

"Let the child alone for a while, my dear; you shall join her presently."

"Why did you not give her the letter to read, Papa?"

"Because to do so would be cruel. Read it and judge for yourself."

"T. Inglis, Esq., Dear Sir," the letter ran: "Lydia, the housekeeper, has asked me to send you word of how things are going on at home, in the absence of her young mistress. For two or three days Mr. Marsh has been entirely unlike himself; he always is passionate at the best of times, but had become so violent, that I felt it was imperative for his own sake to keep him out of the schoolroom, as I really feared he would do some of the lads a permanent injury, and render himself amenable to the law. How much his constant companionship with Mr. Penmaur has been to blame, I cannot say, though, that the latter gentleman is answerable to a great extent, I firmly believe. However, he has not been here since Friday last, and has, I am told, left the town. On Saturday morning there were two letters for Mr. Marsh, one bearing the Plymouth postmark; he read them in the breakfast-room alone, and when, an

hour later, Lydia entered the room, she was horrified to find him on the floor unconscious, with the letters both clenched in his hands. We sent at once for Doctor Tremaine, and managed to get him to his room. At first there were grave fears as to whether he would speak again, but since then he has recovered sufficiently to be able to make us understand some of the things he wished to say; though, as to movement, he is utterly powerless. In some way, Miss Marsh appears to have angered him furiously, for he never mentions her without every sign of anger, and his passion against Mr. Penmaur is even more intense. Will you exercise your own discretion as to what and how Miss Marsh is to be told, and assure her of our deep sympathy? Yours very truly, Henry Simmonds."

"Poor Zennie. Poor, poor Zennie. Where is the use of her going home, if her father is so angry with her?"

"My dear, think a moment; is she likely to content herself here, under these conditions?"

"No; I am sure she won't," Mabel was obliged to confess.

"I wonder whether I should go with her papa?" She had left the room, but came back to ask the question.

"No, my child; your presence would only complicate matters. Zenobia will not find herself without friends at home. Remember how kind and affectionate the doctor's family all are towards her."

"Oh dear, I am so sorry for her, and Mr. Peardon. I wonder when they will see each other again."

"I shall send a message to town to-night. He can then see her as she passes through. Go to her now, poor child, and persuade her to sleep if possible at all, Tell her she must husband all her strength if she is hoping to nurse the sufferer."

#### CHAPTER XXII.

#### ANOTHER TURN OF FORTUNE'S WHEEL.

ZENOBIA will never forget that sudden and anxious journey home. She was dressed and waiting when Mabel came to call her in the grey of the chilly dawn, but, try as she would it was impossible to swallow more than a mouthful or two of food, and her white tear-stained face, was pitiful to behold, as, after returning passionately Mabel's loving kiss, she drove away in the dusk of the early morning.

"Keep a brave heart my dear," said Mr. Inglis,

"things may not be so bad, after all."

Very few words were spoken by the lovers during the short waiting time at Plymouth station. Strongly as he was tempted to express his keen disappointment at losing sight of her so soon, with little prospect of a reunion, Zedekiah saw that the girl's hardly won self-control would bear very little strain, so, with praise-worthy unselfishness, he contented himself with rendering her every small service he could possibly think of.

But when the moment of parting came, and she had only to take possession of the corner he had secured for her, he seized the girl's trembling hands in his own, and, pressing a passionate kiss on the sweet lips, set in such pathetic curves, whispered—

"You will write, my darling? Whatever anyone says, you will be true to your promise? I must hear sometimes of your welfare."

"Yes," she replied, returning the kiss, while the faintest of faint blushes just tinged her white cheeks.

"Take your seats. Tickets ready," called the porter, banging the carriage doors noisily as he hastened towards them, and the parting was over.

Zedekiah watched until the train was out of sight; then, turning sadly away, went back to his delayed breakfast, and resumed, as best he could, the daily duties which, for the time being, had lost their wonted charm. Bert Hocking who was installed now in his own especial department, wondered what made old Zed as he called him in thought, so absent and easily ruffled that day. Bert was, at least for the present, so grateful at being lifted out of the slough into which he had rapidly sunk, that his duties were performed in a much more satisfactory manner than had been usual with him in past days.

How the long hours passed for the young traveller she could never tell. A kindly farmer's wife, the only other occupant of the compartment, glanced frequently towards the girl, who sat so still in her corner with clasped hands, as though afraid to move lest her composure should break down.

But she, with a kindly "good-day, Miss, keep up heart," got out at Lydford, and from there Zenobia had the compartment to herself.

At length with a sigh of relief she saw looming in the distance the grand old castle ruins, and presently the little station was reached. There was no one to meet her, evidently she was not expected by this train, so leaving her box in the care of a porter she walked rapidly away, and was just crossing the bridge when a hand was laid on her shoulder, and a familiar voice said—

"Why Zennie! My dear Zennie! Where have you sprung from?"

"Oh Doctor Tremaine, how is father?" she sobbed, "please tell me."

"As well as his temper will let him be," was the reply. "Who on earth has been mad enough to summon you?"

"You should have done so yourself Doctor. Did you really think I could remain away enjoying myself, when he was dangerously ill?"

"No. That is the very reason why I never wrote, and that your presence now is a mistake I am firmly convinced. However you won't believe that I suppose, so I will go back with you."

"Bless us an' save us!" exclaimed Lydia when her young mistress walked in. "How on earth did you get here, for goodness gracious sake?"

"Who is responsible for letting her know anything about her father's illness, Lydia?" said the doctor sternly.

"Fay then," the woman replied. "If so be that anybody's to blame it's me. 'Tis that. Where's the sense in keeping dark what 'll hev to be told, I'd like to know?"

"You were quite right Lyddy. I am glad you sent," said Zenobia quietly.

"I baint then, now I look at 'ee. What's made 'ee look that weshed out, eh?"

"She must have started almost as soon as it was light," said the doctor. "And I'll be bound has not tasted a morsel of food. No wonder she looks more dead than alive."

While speaking Zenobia was hastily taking off her hat and jacket, and now said—

"Where is he?"

'In his own room for sure. Where should he be

else? But you baint fit for sich a sight, before you've had a morsel to eat, not you."

"I must go." She turned to the doctor saying—

"Will you come with me?"

"Of course I'll come. I should like to fight somebody for this," he muttered. "Its no sight for a daughter's eyes."

No wonder Zenobia shrank back in dismay, as she caught the first glimpse of the face on the white pillow. The features were swollen, and distorted out of all proportion, but the eyes presented an absolutely awful appearance; starting from their sockets they rolled restlessly and ceaselessly from side to side, as though engaged in a perpetual quest, and the left hand—the right was perfectly useless—lay on the counterpane, the fingers feebly opening and closing over a paper they held. At sight of his daughter he made a tremendous effort to say something, but succeeded only in hissing some unintelligible sounds indicative of anger as she drew pityingly near, while his face became a livid purple.

"You are doing him harm, my dear, come away," said the doctor gently. "I would have given a good deal to have kept you at a distance until there was an improvement. This can only wring your heart to no purpose," he added, leading her with kindly force from the room.

"Oh doctor, what has caused it?" she cried sinking into a chair, and pushing away the food Lydia anxiously placed before her.

"My dear, you must eat," he said reprovingly.

"Afterwards," she murmured," tell me, please. I really will try to take something when I know more."

It was useless arguing with her, he soon found, so

going to a desk doctor Tremaine took out two letters, and placing them before her, said—

"These were in his hand, when Lydia found him, perhaps they will explain."

One was, as she expected, in Zedckiah's hand-writing, so, putting it aside, she opened the other, and read it slowly and carefully, exclaiming presently—

"Oh, my poor father! There is explanation enough here! No wonder he is ill! Read it! I always seemed to know that Mr. Penmaur was, or could become a bad man, ever since first speaking to him, but I did not think even he was bad enough for this! We are ruined, utterly, irretrievably ruined, I fear."

"Nonsense, my dear child. How on carth could Penmaur ruin you? No matter how strong his wish to do so might be."

"Read it. Read that letter." she exclaimed impatiently. It was only too true that at least a very large sum, as Mr. Marsh would feel it, was lost. He had allowed himself, it appeared, to be persuaded to withdraw from their safe investments,—which yielded but a moderate rate of interest,—his modest savings, and let his new friend manipulate them, he having promised to obtain at least treble the return they at present made, and this letter told him, in unmistakeable terms, that the whole was lost.

"Well!" exclaimed Lydia emphatically, "I always thought as how the master were a bit of a fool an now I know it! To think that anybody in their seven senses, would 'a trusted a stranger like to that!"

"You were vexed because I would not trust him

with myself Lyddy," said Zenobia sternly. "He has done this because I refused."

"And the other letter? May I see that?" said the doctor presently, after a pause of silent amazement.

"It is from Zedekiah Peardon, telling of my promise to become his wife," she spoke clearly and proudly, although the expression of her beautiful face was still very sorrowful.

"You marry Zed Peardon!" exclaimed Lyddy, starting to her feet. "Tan-ny-by, you never mean it? 'Tis'nt fitty! Why who an what's he I wonder to dream of such a thing? Like his impudence!"

"Lyddy, listen to me a moment. Instead of thinking that I am condescending at all in promising to marry the man I love, I see nothing but condescension on his part for having asked me to do so! You do not, and never did, understand what a very king among men he is. Mr. Penmaur is not worthy of being in the same room with him!"

"Hoity-toity! Well, of all things! They do say as how love's blind, seemeth to me you must be blinder than the very blindest! Zedekiah Peardon, a king! Lawks a daisy! Ess for you. Aw my dear, don't 'ee, now don't 'ee throw yourself away, like as that would be a doing! Since ever I found out you really didn't fancy that there swell, haven't I giv'd over saying a word about your weddin' he? But this!—Laws, doctor Tremaine, why ever don't 'ee say as how it can't be?"

"Because I really can't see what objection you have to him. Zed is a fine fellow, very fine."

"'Pon my soul, you'm past bearin'!" she exclaimed.
"I declare—"

"Lyddy,"-Zenobia stood up, her slender figure

drawn up to its full height, and with her rich ringing voice not raised loudly, but emphasising each word clearly and impressively, continued—"listen a moment. I have promised to marry Mr. Peardon, and fully intend to keep my word; though it is possible we may have to wait; he, and no other man will eventually be my husband. So please to remember that any more slighting words will be an insult to me, as well as to him, and, besides being utterly useless, will make me intensely unhappy. I know, oh Lyddy dear, I know that you love me too well to do that wilfully."

Tears of vexation rose to Lydia's eyes, as exclaiming, "Drat it all!" she hurried from the room, and, speeding away to the kitchen, let her strong irritation find full vent, in scolding for the next hour, the unfortunate little maid, who found it an utter impossibility to please her exacting teacher that afternoon, try as earnestly as she would.

"Poor Lyddy, pride in her young mistress is very strong and it has received a rude blow," mused the doctor.

"She will come round, I have not much fear of Lyddy's obduracy, she loves me too well. Now doctor, dear, please tell me what to do; I shall nurse him, of course."

"Suppose he will not let you?"

"I am not afraid of that either. Even should he object at first, he will be glad that I should do so before long."

After Dr. Tremaine had given his attentive listener full directions as to procedure, and seen that she took at least a little refreshment, he said—

"Now I must go, they will be wondering what has become of me."

"A moment please," she looked up at him pleadingly, "I don't know who to ask for advice but you, doctor. You say father will probably be ill a very long time, and I can see for myself that, at least for the present, he will need my whole attention. Will you take this letter with you, and make all enquiries for me? If its contents speak truly we must leave here, I fancy."

"I will do anything I possibly can for you, my dear."

When the girl again entered the sick-room her father appeared to be calmer, and his eyes were closed, so, slipping round to the side of the bed away from the light, she busied herself in making things more comfortable. Presently the sufferer groaned and moved his head uneasily, passing her hand under his pillow, she gently raised him into an easier position, then, after bathing his burning brow, as she had so often done for her mother, sat down and began reading aloud in a clear, though low and soothing voice. As he lay he could not see her, and Zenobia, taking no notice of his futile attempts to do so, he presently ceased trying, and by degrees evidently listened to the words she read.

For more than an hour she continued; if, for a moment her voice was silent, her father uttered a sound of impatience.

At length, however, his heavy, regular breathing, told her that he slept, and laying down her book poor Zenobia gave herself up to sad thoughts. If her father could no longer teach, and had nothing to live on, she herself must work, and, with a home to keep for him, what was to become of the life together to which she and her lover looked forward? She had sat thus for perhaps half an hour when the

door opened noiselessly, and Lydia put her face cautiously inside; seeing that the patient slept, she came forward saying delightedly—having worked off her ill-humour evidently,—

"Bless us now, my dear chield! this be summat like as it should be. Go your ways and speak weth Miss Violet, her's come to see 'ce. I'll bide here a bit. Eh though, he hevn't slept like this, not since he were first took bad."

"Well, young lady," Violet exclaimed, when her friend joined her. "So you have taken us all by surprise. It is a long time since I saw papa so vexed as he seemed at dinner."

"Yes, here I am. Of course I came as soon as I knew of father's illness. How are you, dear? You look very happy."

"I am sorry I cannot return the compliment, even though you are wearing the badge of willing slavery as well as myself," she laughed, raising Zenobia's hand to examine her ring. "Don't make yourself miserable about Mr. Marsh, I am sure he is not worth it; I can't help saying so. I really don't see how anyone can be expected to love a father who acted as he does."

"I am very sorry for him," Zenobia replied, "How can I help being so? He is growing an old man, and it is very hard to lose what money he had in that way."

"Lost his money, has he? I didn't know that. Oh dear, I am sorry. Perhaps there is something in this note of papa's about it then."

"Have you a note? How kind of him to write so soon."

"My dear Zennie,"—the note ran, "I called at the

bank after leaving you, and found it was a fact about your father having withdrawn his account. I then saw Mr. G—, and learnt there also that the shares he has held with him are sold. So I very much fear that,—unless the letter is untrue, nothing more than a veiled threat—all you have to depend on is the interest on your own small inheritance, twenty pounds per annum. My child, the words look very blunt and cruel, written, but the truest kindness lies in letting you know the exact position, because, though I think of you as a child, I know you will not act like one. On Saturday, after your father's condition became known, a gentleman sounded me as to the school, and made a fairly liberal offer, in case it should be found necessary to dispose of it, under the circumstances. If you think fit I will at once communicate with him, and would advise you to accept his terms.

"I wish I could report differently of your father's state of health, but it is no use glossing things over. He has been liable to suffer from an attack of the kind for many years, but I hoped the danger might have been warded off, and when, after your mother's death, he was for many weeks content to let his arch enemy alone, I ceased to have active fears for him, unfortuately of late the old passion appears to have returned with increased force, and his always irritable temper, seemed to make it impossible for him to exercise the necessary self-control, so, as a consequence, the collapse is a serious one. It may be many weeks, perhaps months before there is any very perceptible improvement, and at the best, he will never be fit to resume his duties. My dear it is very hard for you, but try to believe that even this might be worse, I shall look in early to-morrow

morning, and will help you to come to some decision as to ways and means."

Violet watched the girl's grave face, which, as she read, took even sadder curves. At length she could no longer keep silent, but kneeling at her side and slipping an arm round her waist lovingly, whispered—

"Are things very dreadful dear?"

"Almost as bad as they can be it seems to me. Oh Vi, I was so happy, unspeakably happy, only yesterday morning, and now,"—

"Now dear, you still have a strong, loving heart to trust in, and many firm friends, who will be true whatever reverses come. So things might be worse,

might they not?"

"Yes I think they might," she replied bravely, raising her head and wiping away a few sorrowful tears. "Can you stay a little longer Vi? I promised to write to Plymouth to-night, and must go back to father soon. Do you mind waiting and posting my letters?"

"Of course not. There is one thing, you are not likely to lose your lover through changed circum-

stances, as girls so often do."

"No indeed! Zed did not ask me to marry him because of anything I might possess, and he is true as steel. Yes there is a silver-lining even in this cloud, and some day I shall find out why it has gathered."

She spoke bravely, and as her pen moved over the paper, Violet saw that a faint colour was returning to her cheek and some of the old lustre to her beautiful eyes.

"Zennie's a brick, mamma," she exclaimed on reaching home. "Instead of such a trouble doing her harm, she's going to be grander than ever, now things are criss-cross."

"Zenobia is made of sterling stuff; I laughed at her absurd name when she was a baby, but she and it are thoroughly suited now," Mrs. Tremaine replied.

"Why didn't you give me a high-sounding name mammy dear? Perhaps I'd have developed to suit it!"

"You are very well as you are. Violets are needed to sweeten the earth, as well as queens to rule, you know. So if you succeed in being sweet and modest, you will fulfil your mission."

Violet made a funny little face, as she laid her head on her mother's shoulder with a caressing

gesture; then said laughingly-

"It's a good thing there are different sorts of people wanted to make up a world, don't you think so? or what would become of little folk like me?"

"Little folk like you can be very vain, and fish openly for compliments," Mrs. Tremaine replied, shaking her head gravely. "Come get your thimble; see what a lot of work I have here."

Several days passed, during which Zenobia was immersed, whenever she could be spared from the sick-room, in arrangements for a speedy removal from the only home she had ever known, to the tiny cottage which she had some hope of being able to keep over her own and her father's head.

Lydia had protested strongly against any change being made just yet, but Zenobia, who saw that the old servant was really troubled, showed her that to stay on under the conditions, would be neither wise nor honest.

"Listen, Lyddy," she said, "Father will never be fit for teaching again, so if we remained on here knowing that, it would be dishonest, don't you think so? By leaving now, the money realized by the furniture we must sell will at least be ours, and we can take plenty of things with us to make the rooms cosy and homelike."

On one point, however, Lyddy absolutely refused to be influenced, she would not, nothing should make her, leave her "chield."

The only lady who ventured to suggest her doing so outside the house, and offered a situation in her own well-appointed home, found her well-meant remarks met by such a torrent of reproaches, that she bitterly regretted having said a word.

"Me leave my chield now? The chield I've nursed and brought up! Leave her when her's in trouble, and poverty! What do'ee think I'm made of, I wonder? No, never a step do I budge."

"But she will not be able to pay for your services."

"Pay for my services! Tan-ny-by, I've no patience with folks that seem to think a servant haven't got no feeling, more'n for the money her gets paid. Drat it, I can work for nought, if so be the worst comes to the worst; or, who knows? perhaps I'll be able bring some grist to the mill myself. Eh, I'll manage some way, you'll see. But leave her I wain't." Nor did she.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

## BRAVE AT DUTY'S CALL.

"MISSIE, my dear chield, do'ee for goodness' sake go out a bit; not sit stewing any longer over that there dratted music. You'm looking that whist it's a punishment to look at 'ee."

"Nonsense, Lyddy, you are far too anxious about my looks. I am sure it is your turn to go out now,

you stay in for days together."

"Well, what if I do? What's a old woman like me want with goin' walking? You just put on your hat, and go right up to see Miss Violet; her'll be getting nearly all her wedding finery ready, and I know her'll want you to see it first hand."

"I was just going up to sit with father. He will be fretting, I am afraid, at being left alone so long." Zenobia cast a longing glance outside as she spoke; she had been working hard all day with her little pupils, and the prospect of a walk in the cool freshness of the evening was very attractive.

"Not it! But suppose he do feel a bit lonely-

can't I sit with 'en?"

"If you don't mind doing that, I really will go out for an hour," the girl replied.

A year had passed since the occurrence of the events recorded in our last chapter, and still Mr. Marsh was a prisoner to one room in the tiny ivy-grown cottage. The long low parlour below his room was, during the day, occupied as a school-room; Zenobia, under the pressure of necessity, had developed a gift for teaching, of which she had never suspected

herself to be possessed; so the twenty little boys and girls, who, by Doctor Tremaine's influence, speedily gathered round her, had now increased to thirty, and she had neither room nor leisure to undertake more, for the burden of teaching and controlling them rested entirely on her young shoulders. Three evenings a week were devoted to music lessons, and her gentle manner, and delicately correct ear, were invaluable in helping on one or two shy and awkward pupils, who, while possessing capacity, had hitherto never been able to do themselves justice.

Lydia's belief in the wonderful ability which her "chield" possessed, was more than confirmed when she found how readily Zenobia, not only attempted to support the little home, but more than that, succeeded in doing it in comfort.

"Her's her mother over again, only more able to do things, because of her greater strength;" said the admiring servant.

"So you don't regret staying with Zennie under these altered conditions, Lyddy?" questioned Doctor Tremaine one day, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Regret! Laws-a-massy, whatever is there to regret? Her father's tied by the leg—for life too, I doubt, an' though I'm bound to say he never was a favourite o' mine, I'm a bit sorry for him—but then her's got grit, that there blessed chield, and I'm prouder than ever o' living with her. Them there wishy-washy fine ladies, I have'nt no patience with they."

"Still, as I heard a lady say a day or two since, you have to work much harder than you should at your years."

"Work! what's a bit o' work, more or less, to me? My years too, I like their impudence! Tell your fine lady friends they've got no call to interfere; how could

they understand the difference between serving a body for money, or for love?"

Certain it is that Zenobia would never have been able to do so well, had Lydia been other than she was; for the old servant watched the girl jealously, lest her strength should be at all overtaxed, and would never let her take up any household duties.

"Tanniby!" she exclaimed, whenever Zenobia made the slightest attempt to do so, "you just stick to your own part o' the work, my dear chield, and leave me to mine; if I can't make the money go farther than you could, more shame for me, that's all I say."

And it was wonderful how far she did make the modest income go. When she understood that her young mistress had refused to become bridesmaid at the forthcoming wedding, from Violet herself, who, in despair at her friend's persistence, carried the trouble to the kitchen, Lydia exclaimed—

"Not be your bridesmaid, 'long weth Miss Lily? I'll see to that!" and with her head thrown back, she went into the parlour saying— "What's this I hear, Missie? You'm only teasin' Miss Violet a bit, of course?"

"No, I'm not teasing, Lyddy. How can I be bridesmaid? Where is the money for a new dress to come from?"

"Well I never! If I didn't think so much! so that's the trouble, eh? What's Miss Lily going to wear?"

"White Llama."

"And what's to prevent your having a white Llama gown too?

Zenobia laughed; "an empty purse, Lyddy," she said. "No, don't say any more, it can't be helped."

"But I shall say some more, and it's all nonsense

about can't be helped; I say it can. How much do 'ee want? Will a matter of two pound be enough?".

"Oh yes, plenty. I could make it myself, you know.

Dressmaking seems to come natural to me."

"Then there you be!" and Lydia triumphantly placed two sovereigns before the astonished girl.

"But Lyddy! Why-wherever did you get them?".

"Never you mind. Them's yours, no fear."

" But—"

"Drat it Missie, go an' buy your gown straight away. Didn't I tell 'ee I'd make the money go farther than you would?"

After the removal Mr. Marsh appeared for the time to become if possible even more helpless, and took little or no notice of what was going on. But as the weeks passed, little by little intelligence returned to his eyes, and a slight access of power to his least death-like hand. One evening after the children had left, his daughter, as she always did, went up to his room as soon as released and, seating herself at his side, began to feed him with some jelly in small spoonfuls, lingering over the operation. Her left hand, on which Zedekiah's ring glistened, rested on the counterpane, and presently she felt it touched, and was conscious that sounds more like words than any she had heard yet, were proceeding from his uncertain lips.

"What is it, father dear?" she questioned gently.

His fingers closed round her hand, and pointing to the ring, he said—

"That. Who? Who?"

Afraid of the result if she gave a straightforward reply, Zenobia blushed, and withdrawing her hand, gently stooped and kissed his forehead, passing her cool fingers over it with a soothing gesture; but he would not be put off; turning his head that he

might look into her face, he again reiterated the question—

" Who?"

"A friend gave it to me, father."

"Pen—Pen—maur?" he gasped.

"No, oh no;" shaking her head emphatically.

"Then—who? Pear—Pear—don?"

"Yes," was the whispered reply.

"No! no!" Again seizing her hand, he tried feebly but persistently to remove the ring from her finger.

After that day he recovered slowly but surely to a certain extent his power of speech, but remained a helpless invalid as far as movement was concerned. Finding that, as long as the ring remained on her finger, his excitement whenever she entered the room became very marked, Zenobia got at length into the habit of removing it at those times, but put it away entirely she would not. Was it not a visible reminder of her lover's truth and fealty? They had not met since that sad morning when their pleasure was so suddenly clouded, but in each heart hope had made an abiding place for himself; so, though their separation often seemed hard, it might have been a great deal worse, each felt, and how thoroughly their regular correspondence helped them to understand each other! Lydia tried at first to persuade her young mistress that her love was wasted, but speedily found that she might as well attempt to stem the rushing mill-stream, on which the window of her room looked, with her own slender person, as try to convince Zenobia of her superiority to the man she loved.

"I say, Vi!" Lily Tremaine called to her sister, who was upstairs, half an hour after Zenobia had

promised Lydia to go out; "you need not put your things on, Zennie is here."

"Is she? That is jolly. Tell her to come right up, will you?"

"Why Vi, what a spread!" exclaimed Zenobia, running upstairs, and kissing her friend. "I never can understand why people need such a quantity of new clothes, just because they are getting married. One would think all the shops would be shut directly the ceremony ended!"

"Funny, isn't it?" laughed Violet. "I don't dislike the custom though, you may be sure," she added, shrugging her shoulders.

"This is the travelling dress, Zennie," cried Lily, holding up a neatly made fawn-coloured cloth costume; "Isn't it pretty?"

"Yes very. You will be a little brown wren in that, Vi."

After examining the various articles, trying on hats, etc., after the manner of girls, Zenobia said—

"When do you expect Mr. Hayton?"

"To-morrow evening. Your own dress is ready, Zennie? Mine is promised to-morrow."

"Vi dear, once more—won't you let me off? I don't feel half bright enough to form one of a wedding group."

"Now Zennie, not another word like that. No, of course I am not going to let you off. The idea! Why, I shouldn't feel properly married if you were not there to support me! What would Papa say, I wonder? Does he not call you his eldest daughter, and the queen of his flower garden? I verily believe if you by any means got out of attending, he would stop the proceedings," she laughed.

"Oh dear, I wouldn't be responsible for such a catastrophe on any account!" exclaimed Zenobia, "so will be on hand without fail. I don't think my home-made dress looks bad at all."

"Of course it doesn't. Pale blue ribbons for you and Lily. I will send yours up as soon as they come to-morrow; of course they must be the same shade, so I ordered enough for both."

"Can you come out for half-an-hour, Vi?" said Zenobia presently. "I should so enjoy a blow on the Castle; it is weeks since I was there."

"Yes run off, Vi," said Lily. "I'll put those tuckers in."

As the two girls were presently entering the grounds of the Castle, a man who was leaving them suddenly drew back into the dimness, having evidently recognised their voices, and, as they passed on, stood watching.

Neither of them turned their heads, but Zenobia shivered slightly, and pressing her arm more closely, Violet whispered under her breath—

"Did you see that man?"

"Yes, and recognised him too, I fear."

"We may be mistaken; but he is certainly very like Mr. Penmaur."

"If it was I hope he did not recognise us," said Zenobia recovering herself. "Anyhow, he cannot work me further harm, so I need not fear him."

"Let us get as high up as we can, the breeze will be splendid on the top to-night," she continued presently, as they slowly ascended. "I think you are going to be very happy, Vi dear," she added. "I like Mr. Hayton very much, and he seems fond enough of you to satisfy even me."

"Yes, I think it will be my own fault if I am not," replied Violet. "You are going to be quite as

happy one day, I hope, dear old Zennie."

"Don't pity me too much, it is unwholesome," was the reply. "Why,—except sometimes,—I am perfectly happy; especially during the last few weeks, for poor father does not get nearly so angry as he did, and I am fulfilling my mother's commission, you know. There," she added, as a fresh breeze tried to lift their hats and pull their hair about their ears, "isn't it worth the climb to have a blow like that? Wherever you go, I don't think you will find any place finer than our grand old Castle."

"You always were an enthusiast about Dunheved's

antiquities."

"No wonder; is there a prettier town in Cornwall? I do hope it will be fine on Thursday, even if this breeze does mean a little rain to-morrow."

"So do I; a sunny wedding is ever so much the nicest. Oh, you must go in again with me directly, I never showed you the pretty silver butter dish my little Sunday scholars gave me. Was'nt it good of them? We are expecting you to supper to-morrow night, remember."

"I don't know that I shall be able to come. Thursday is as much as I ought to take. Father misses me

now if I am away very much."

"Try just this once."

"Well, I will try. I should like to come, you may be sure. Is Mrs. Tremaine reconciled to your desertion vet?"

"Not quite, I fancy; dear mammy, she is finding it very difficult to realize that her little girls are growing up."

"I don't wonder at that, she has such a youthful

appearance herself. I declare very often she looks much more like your elder sister than mother."

"After all Zennie, I don't think I feel so child-like as I look," remarked Violet presently. She had been silent for some moments, and an expression of unwonted gravity rested on her usually merry face. "I think I realize fully the responsibility of getting married. Do you remember pitching into Lily and me at Bude, for talking of love so lightly? I have never forgotten it, and Willie will have a better wife as the result of your lecture."

"Did I do so? What a disagreeable girl you must have thought me?"

"No I didn't. If I had you would never have influenced me in the least."

It was almost dark before the girls parted at the doctor's gate. Too dark for Zenobia to think of entering the house again that night; she had lingered far beyond the time at first intended; and, as she hurried home, her mind was so full of other thoughts, that only as it were in the background, loomed the memory of her enemy's unexpected appearance. Indeed she had begun to hope that, after all, she was deceived; but, as she turned into the darkest part of her walk, a hand was laid on her arm, and a low, well-remembered voice said—

"Just a word, Miss Marsh. I will not detain you long."

Shaking off the hand as though its touch stung her, she hastened on; but again was detained with a firmer pressure, and, planting himself before her, Charles Penmaur said—

"I have not waited here for you to pass all this time, to be so easily cluded now. Kindly hear what I have to say."

Finding she could not free herself or pass on without a struggle, Zenobia stood still, saying proudly—

"I fail to understand what Mr. Penmaur can pos-

sibly have to say of interest to me."

"You know me then? Well I have this much to say—I am a fool, no one knows that better than myself, but I cannot banish the impression you have made on me, and am by no means inclined to think that you will never be my wife. Sooner or later such love as mine *must* win its reward."

"Love!! Sir! You do not even know in the faintest degree what love means! Where is the love, I wonder, in a man who could deliberately set himself to ruin the person he called his friend, because he failed to get his own way?"

"You judge me wrongly, and hardly; how should I know that those investments would turn out badly?"

"Have they turned out badly? I doubt it some-times."

"Well, I own you acted too precipitately; investments like those often return profits after some delay. Oh my darling, my darling, you must, you shall be mine! How I would love you!"

"Sir! incapable as you have shown yourself of true feeling, I did not imagine that even you would dare to insult me like this! Unloose my arm this instant."

"Insult!" he cried; "what insult lies in my begging your acceptance of what other girls, plenty of them, would give their ears to win?"

"Other girls, indeed! Allow me to pass!"

"Listen a moment. You shall," he hissed, as she attempted to pass him. "You have been working now at unaccustomed and wearing drudgery for nearly a year, and must, I should imagine, be about sick of

it all. I offer you entire freedom, a future of luxury, and a comfortable competence for your father."

"Do you know what my father has to thank you for? A blighted life, and ruined prospects. Health of both body and mind shattered. Yet you dare stand here and ask me willingly to consent that all my years, be they few or many, shall be spent in companionship with the man who is capable of committing deeds like these, and worse, oh how much worse, some of your actions have been!"

"Who has been talking to you about me?"

"No matter. Fortunately I am able to give my father all the comfort he is likely to need any more in this world; and, though you did your best to ruin him body and soul, I can see, even in his present condition, a blessing; you have done your worst. Sir, if you will persist in detaining me here, you shall at least hear the truth. Can you not understand that it is because of the badness which is so ingrained in your nature that I and all pure-minded women must shrink from your touch as pollution? I would rather beg, nay starve, than accept the smallest favour at your hands, infinitely rather! I can only hope that some day your eyes may be opened to the realization of your own terrible failings."

"If you married me, you could make of me what you like."

"No, no; a thousand times no. Such self-immolation never was successful yet."

How dark it had grown; only the outlines of their figures was visible now, and, as Zenobia ceased speaking they both stood perfectly still, for she would not struggle for freedom until obliged, and he only held her arm more tightly. At length exclaiming—"I will

succeed,"—he attempted to pass his other arm round her waist, but, mindful of their last meeting, Zenobia was too quick for him, and swerving round suddenly she would have fallen, had not someone whose approach had been unheard, caught her as she slipped.

"Ullo, what's up here?" rang out the doctor's cheery voice.

"Oh Doctor Tremaine, I am so thankful," the girl sobbed, feeling herself at length released, "go home with me, will you? You are my good angel. I was getting so frightened."

"But who and what frightened you, my dear? Go home with you? Of course I will. I have just been to see your father."

"It was that dreadful Mr. Penmaur again;" she shivered as she spoke, and clasped his arm more tightly.

"The dickens it was! Confound the rascal, how dare he show his face here again, I wonder?"

"Bless us an' save us, you've been gone a long hour, I must say, and now you've come in looking worse than you went out;" exclaimed Lyddy, catching sight of the girl's white face.

"She's had a bit of a fright, Lyddy; put her to bed, she'll be all right again in the morning, I guarantee," said the doctor cheerily, "Good-night."



## CHAPTER XXIV.

## "ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL."

"MABEL wants you to come out this evening, Peardon," said Mr. Inglis one morning, "she thinks, I believe, that it is a very long time since you paid your respects," he added laughing.

"If I can get this statement finished in time, I will do so. I should enjoy it of all things;" replied Zedekiah. "Miss Inglis has proved far too true a friend to be allowed even to imagine herself neglected."

"I can't risk having a refusal to take back; get what you must do yourself finished this morning, and leave the rest to Hocking. Of course, coming to-night means staying over Sunday."

"It is very kind of you, Mr. Inglis," said Zed gratefully. After working busily for an hour or longer at the papers strewed round him, he at length heaved a relieved sigh, and, touching a small bell, was immediately joined by Bert Hocking.

"Oh, there you are, Bert? Can you manage to copy these papers, I wonder, and get that statement for Carson Bros. ready for to-night's post? I think you will find all the information necessary here," and he explained clearly and distinctly just what was needed.

"Yes, I think there will be no difficulty," replied Bert presently. "Why are you asking me to do this?" he queried, "I thought this department was purely yours."

"Mr. Inglis told me to let you help. So do your

best. Who knows? it may mean another step up the ladder."

"Trust me," was the emphatic reply, as Hocking turned to leave the room.

"I say Bert, I wish you would do something for me to-morrow."

"Well, what is it?"

"They are short-handed down at the Docks Mission, and I shall be away; will you go in and help for an hour? I wish you would."

"A lot of use I should be among those young

"A lot of use I should be among those young shavers!" laughed Bert; adding in a moment however, "I don't like to say no, but if any catastrophe takes place you will be the sufferer, mind."

"I'll risk that if you will only go."

"I promise then."

\* \* \* \* \* \*

"I want to have a little talk with you myself; come into the library before going to the drawing-room after dinner," said Mr. Inglis as they drove from the station.

"I had begun to think you never intended coming to see me again!" Mabel Inglis exclaimed, as the two gentlemen joined her on the terrace. "What has been the reason of your long desertion, Mr. Peardon?"

"Dinner at seven as usual, I suppose?" interposed her father, "I will leave you to entertain each other while I go and look to Bess, she seemed to go lame just now, I thought."

"Has it been longer than usual since my last visit, Miss Inglis?" replied Zed. "I had no intention of seeming ungrateful; but we have been more than usually busy of late, I am glad to say."

"Enough so to please even you?" she laughed.

"Your working capacity always appears to me to be abnormally active."

"Does it? That is because you only see me now and then. Do you know that the chief cause of the blame I used to meet with, was on the score of idle dreaming?"

"You must have entirely changed your nature since those days then." They were walking slowly towards the shrubbery, and, if Zed's head had not been so entirely filled with the image of the girl he loved so passionately, he must have been thrilled by the fascination this woman at his side possessed. As it was, her charm of manner insensibly exerted a calming influence over him; the impatience with which his mind had been filled as he neared the house, and memory presented picture after picture of past happy moments spent here, died away, and when, reaching a seat, Mabel said—

"When did you hear from Dunheved last?" he was able to turn a very bright smile towards her as he sat down. How the sudden light in his face transformed him! Mabel smiled to herself as she watched the illumination grow, and spread, until his whole countenance was positively irradiated by it.

"Yesterday," he replied.

"And I had a letter this morning."

"Did you?"

"Yes.-What would Zennie say if I passed it on, I wonder?" she continued slowly.

"Do you not mind? I should so like to read it," he exclaimed eagerly.

"I daresay. Well,-there it is, and I will leave you to digest its contents, while I see what yonder lad wants," she replied, smiling as she walked away.
"Dear Mabel," the letter ran, "I tried to write

you before last night's post left, but father was so unusually restless and excited after I came home, that I am almost tempted to think he is more cognisant of what is taking place than we imagine. I wonder sometimes if, after all, he is going to get better? The weather yesterday morning was simply lovely, and Violet the sunniest of brides. As she stood at the altar, a ray of golden sunlight came glinting downward, until it rested on her head like a benediction. Just as it should be, our bride never looked bonnier. Her long glossy curls appeared to catch and hold the sunlight. Perhaps it was the effect of her wedding veil, but I certainly thought she seemed taller than ever before. Mr. Hayton looked so proud and manly, as he gave the responses, that I feel convinced she is going to be very happy. It was a tearless wedding too. Violet said laughingly the night before, 'I am not going to cry to-morrow, it is a poor compliment to the man you love, to cry when you promise yourself to him before others,' and she kept her word, going off with a bright smile as soon as breakfast was over. That is not quite what I wanted to write about, howeverbut the echo of wedding bells is in the air, so I could hardly help telling you a little about it. Do you know, I feel sometimes that a great deal of sympathy, for which so many sad hearts often pine in vain, is being wasted over me; and I want you who are one of the very kindest of all-to believe that I am really and truly not unhappy. A little older and graver, perhaps, but that is all. How could I be so, when I am convinced as firmly as I ever could be of anything, that God's hand is in all these apparently adverse circumstances, and that for good; I see it more clearly than ever now. You

know something of what my mother was, though only by report. No one could possibly realize in all its fulness the beauty of her character, as I myself, however; for no one, not even her husband, knew her so really well. She appeared to have imbibed so much of the wonderful self-forgetting spirit of Christ that I am convinced what she intensely desired for those she loved *must* come to pass. Poor father fought and rebelled, determined to have his own way, no matter where it led, and he had to be conquered; to this end Mr. Penmaur's evil was overruled for good (oh Mabel, he has been here again, and startled me terribly on Tuesday night.")

"He has! How dare he! How dare he?" exclaimed Zed, clenching his hand.

"And," the letter continued, "if the evil he worked has darkened my prospects a little, God has given me with the need, strength and ability to work for him, and so witness to my daughterly affection, which I fear he doubted. Underlying all this, have I not the consciousness of a true man's deep constant love, strong enough to wait patiently God's time, instead of making us both miserable because we cannot take our own?"

"My darling, my noble, clear-sighted darling," murmured Zed passionately, as he read thus far; "yes, the waiting has been good for us both, and the work she is doing will not injure her, that is plain."

There was more in the letter, but, before the thoughts her words aroused had ceased to thrill his spirit, Mabel rejoined him, evidently greatly agitated.

Zed did not notice at first her hurried manner, or see the ominous pink paper she held in her hand; but, slowly folding the letter, he held it towards her, saying—

<sup>&</sup>quot;Thank you so much."

As she took it Mabel said-

"Mr. Peardon, I—" her voice trembled, and catching sight of her face Zed started to his feet, exclaiming—

"Is anything the matter?"

"This has just come-read it."

"Mr. Marsh died this afternoon, very suddenly," ran the message.

He appeared too dazed to speak, as the words danced before his eyes. Mabel watched him anxiously, yet with a touch of impatience, as he continued holding the telegram without speaking; this appeared to her the time for action, not dreaming.

Presently her father crossed the lawn at some distance, and she called—

" Papa, come here please, quick!"

"Well, my dear. What's the matter?"

"A telegram from Dunheved. Mr. Marsh is dead."

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated slowly, and Zed, rousing himself as he heard the words repeated aloud said—

"I should like to go to her."

"Go? of course you must go; there is no question about that. There, that is the dinner bell, and some of us not ready; come away for a wash."

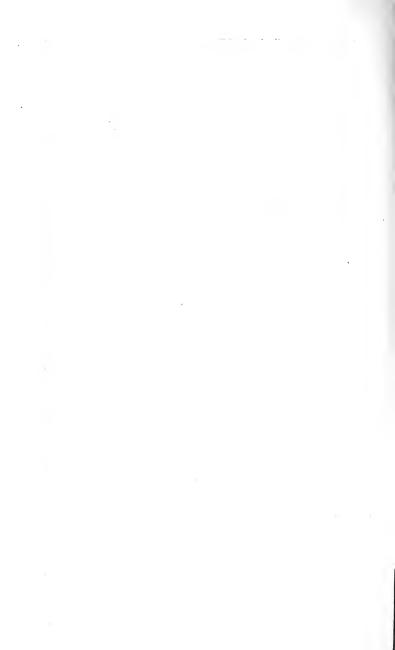
They formed a very silent group at the dinner table, and neither of them ate much. Presently, pushing away his plate, Zed said—

"When can I start?"

"Not to-night, I am sorry to say. Is there a train through to-morrow? Come into the library, there is a time-table there. Bless my soul, man, don't look like that. Yes," he added, after turning over the leaves for a moment," one starts early in the morning, so you had better go up again to-night. Sit down there, you



"OH ZED, IS TO BEALTY YOU?"-PAGE



would gain nothing by leaving just yet, and I want a few words with you as I said. Can you attend to me?"

"Yes sir," Zed replied, giving himself a mental shake.

"Young Hocking has shown himself fairly reliable lately, has he not?"

"Yes; I never met anyone who improved so rapidly in a short time."

"And you think he is capable of filling a post of trust?"

"Yes, I do think so."

"Could he take your place in a large measure, for instance?"

Glancing up quickly, Zed replied-

"I think he might be able to do so after a little practice, but,—do I understand?"

"I hope you will directly. You see I have no son, and am growing old enough to feel that it would be pleasant to be released from business, to a great extent. I have stuck to it pretty closely for long years now. For some time the thought of taking a partner has been seriously occupying me, but I am conservative enough to dread new faces, and do not particularly need money in the works; so, after mature consideration, have decided on taking a somewhat unusual step. Will you become working partner with me?"

"But, Sir!"

"Hear me out, please," said Mr. Inglis raising his hand. "Your post will be no sinecure, at least at first; most of your present duties will call for supervision, and I shall want you to spend each morning in my room. By October I see no reason why you should not be capable of assuming the reins of government, thus setting me free to go abroad with that daughter of mine, so fulfilling a dream that we have cherished for many years."

Zed rose to his feet, feeling I suppose, that such astonishing good fortune could only be received properly in an erect position, before he replied—

"Will I do as you propose? Mr. Inglis, the most distant possibility of my ever filling such a post as the one you offer had never entered my head. Do you?— Can you really mean it?"

"I am very far from joking, you may rest assured, and am not speaking before considering the matter in all its bearings. Besides, as I said before, you will have to work hard."

"That is nothing; nothing; work never frightened me yet. I am not likely to let it do so now."

"Very well then, that question is decided. Now for details."

Two hours rapidly sped away, as Zed was being initiated into the duties of his new position, while Mabel, alone in the Drawing-room, let her fingers wander idly over the keys of her piano, while she was, in thought, with Zenobia; full of sympathy with her sorrow, yet seeing clearly how near joy was coming.

"You will have a definite proposal to take with you to-morrow morning," said Mr. Inglis at length. "On four hundred a year such moderate people as Miss Marsh and yourself will find it quite possible

to commence housekeeping comfortably."

"Comfortably! Why Sir, I never dreamed of being able to offer her such a position, years hence even."

"Never be over modest, or underrate yourself to too great an extent. Remember, outsiders often take a man on his own valuation."

"Mabel, my dear, you may really look forwardwith some prospect of realizing your ambition-to going abroad in the Autumn. Shake hands with my

new partner;" said Mr. Inglis, laying his hand on her head a few minutes later.

"Have you settled it then, papa? How glad I am. Shake hands? That I will! Success to the new venture, Mr. Peardon!" Zed's emotion almost overpowered him, as he attempted a reply to the bright-cyed girl's glad greeting.

\* \* \*

Everything was done that could be, and in the silent dimness of her own room Zenobia Marsh sat exhausted, on the morning of the following day. The end had come so unexpectedly, that even yet it was scarcely possible to believe the querulous voice would summon her no more. Several times today she had started up suddenly, to answer an imaginary sound.

"Would you like Lily to come in for a few hours, my dear?" questioned the doctor, when he looked in on the way to Church.

"No thank you;" she replied, "I would rather be alone to-day."

Lyddy was as quiet in the tiny kitchen; a bright fire burnt in the small grate, but, as there appeared to be little likelihood that a dinner would be eaten, she made no attempt at cooking one.

Outside presently the sound of many feet passing told her that people were leaving Church, and recalled her wandering thoughts. At the same instant a gentle knock on the back door arrested her attention.

"If that's anybody wants me, I can't do with mun now," she muttered, slowly raising the latch. "Why, laws me, Mr. Peardon! It's never you, be it? Who'd 'a thought o' seeing you now?"

"Yes Lyddy, it's me. How is she?"

"Oh, her's bearing up brave; better'n I thought for. Come you in; go fore into the parlour there. I'll go see if her's asleep."

"Missie, my dear, be 'ee too tired to come down-stairs a bit, I wonder?" she questioned, opening the

girl's door softly.

"Who wants me Lyddy? If it is dinner, I am not a bit hungry."

"No; it's just a friend wants to see 'ee; but if so be you don't want to come down, I'll tell he so."

"No, I'll come."

She had not put on a proper dress this morning, and her white dressing-gown clung to her slender form, accentuating its exquisitely rounded proportions, and heightening the pure pallor of her complexion, as she slowly entered the room, where Zed-far too impatiently excited to sit down-was standing not far from the door.

"Zed!" she exclaimed, "Oh Zed, is it really you?"
"My darling, my pure white queen!" The words

were smothered in a wild embrace.

"Eh laws! There's no mistake about they two loving one another!" muttered Lydia, as, shutting the door gently, she turned away.

For several minutes Zenobia did not speak, but, laying her head on her lover's shoulder, cried quietly, blessed, healing tears, while he stroked her glossy hair with tender, lingering touch. At length she looked up, and, smiling at him, said-

"How did you know? It was good of you to come so soon; I was just sending you word."

"Somebody wired to Miss Inglis; I was there when it came."

<sup>&</sup>quot;I am so glad."

"You are looking worn, my darling. I fear things have been harder for you than you would say."

"I would not have missed one trial of them all," she replied emphatically. "I knew it was all quite right, so how could I rebel?"

"Poor Father—he looks so calm," she continued after a pause, "all disfigurement is gone; he looks as he must have done when mother first loved him. And—" her voice was low and solemn—" Mother knows now that I have fulfilled my trust."

"Did he remove the embargo from our love?"

I never tried to make him towards the last, dear. You see he had no opportunity of learning to know you as I do. My own mind has been fully made up all the time, and, in a matter like disposing of herself, I hold that a girl has the right of choice—when nothing can be said against the character of him she loves—besides, more important matters than my own happiness occupied us. I think he saw clearly at last, though he could not say a great deal. When I mentioned mother's name, instead of looking startled and anxious as at first, he seemed wishful to hear more. Once or twice, when the power of speech first returned slightly, he made tremendous efforts to tell me something—about her, I think—but not latterly, and I never questioned him. How long can you stay?"

"As long as you want me. Miss Inglis says she will take no denial, you must return with me."

"I cannot do that." Zenobia shook her head slowly. "It is the middle of the term, the children will be here again on Wednesday morning."

"But my darling! Surely, surely under the circumstances you will give up that drudgery now? Listen, I

can offer you a home with every comfort, as soon as you will consent to take possession of it." And he told her in a few graphic sentences the arrangement arrived at last night.

Zenobia listened breathlessly, with her hands clasped in her lap, and her large eyes fixed on his face, while a slow flush of pleasure mounted in her white cheeks.

When he ceased speaking, she sprang to her feet exclaiming—

"There Zed! Did I not always say you would succeed? Always! And you have indeed! So soon too! Why you could do anything you liked, I believe. I am proud of you! Here," she continued, rushing away to the kitchen, and embracing its solitary inhabitant, "You have been sorrowing with me, dear old Lyddy, come in and help me to rejoice properly now?"

"Why, bless us an' save us, Missie! What's come to 'ee, for goodness gracious' sake?" said Lyddy, alarmed.

"Joy, Lyddy! Come and hear, never mind that saucepan, that will not harm, and if it does—"she added recklessly, "what matters? Come along."

"Give Lyddy that armchair, Zed; now sit down here, and tell her what you have just told me!"

The girl was trembling with excitement, and, as her lover obeyed, turned from one to the other in restless delight.

"Well! Seemeth to me you be one o' the lucky ones, sure enough!" Lydia exclaimed when Zed had rapidly recapitulated his good news. "Who'd a thought it? There must be summat in 'ee more'n common, I'm

free to confess. Four hundred pound a year is a main lot o' money, for any man to make, let alone you."

"He isn't lucky, Lyddy! I hate that word. He is only earning the reward of doing his duty patiently all these years, and using the brains God has blessed him with. And I am quite sure it has been hard work plodding on sometimes."

"But it is all of no value to me, Lyddy, if she will not share it," said Zed. "Help me to persuade her."

"Share it? of course her will! What's to hinder? And you'll take her far enough from here, I s'pose. What's to come o' me then?"

"Go with us, Lyddy. Indeed you shall. Did you really think we should leave you alone?"

"Tanniby! What would an old woman like me do, living in a strange place, I'd like to know?"

"Wherever I go, you must, Lyddy. That is decided," said Zenobia.

Unwonted tears glistened in Lydia's eyes, as she left the lovers once more to themselves, and she went back to the kitchen murmuring—

"That there blessed chield o' mine gets more like her angel mother every day, her doth that. I'm free to confess I'll hev to go weth mun, after all's said and done; what could I do now wanting her, I wonder?"

Strengthened by Zed's companionship, the next two days passed calmly away, and, even as she stood at the open grave, looking down on the coffin which contained her mother's form, few tears fell from Zenobia's eyes, and those few were not bitter ones. Indeed, the certainty that, could that mother speak, it would be to bless her love, rested warmly in her heart and led her to clasp more closely the arm she held.

Nothing, however, moved her from her first decision, to continue teaching her little band until the close of the term. In despair Zedekiah appealed to Doctor Tremaine, when he found his own arguments of no avail.

"Not go back with you at once? Of course she won't," was the doctor's reply. "Why, did you really imagine she could not continue a law to herself a little longer, after such a long apprenticeship?"

"But, Doctor, there is absolutely *no* need now, and I am sure she needs rest and change badly enough, judging from her appearance."

"Well, I would advise you, as a friend, to leave her alone in this matter. Zennie is capable of judging wisely, and I am not going to interfere. Surely man, you don't want the girl to marry you straight off?"

"I don't see why there should be any delay. I amnot asking that, however; merely that she should be near me."

"Wait patiently, my lad. You won't have to wait long, I'm confident."

Doctor Tremaine was right. At the end of the term Zenobia finally bade good-bye to the children she had learned to love, almost as tearfully as they sobbed out their own good-byes, and, leaving Lydia in charge, went to stay with Mabel Inglis, from whose home she was quietly married early in October.

A pretty cottage, not far from Clover Mount, being vacant, Lydia, accompanied by the few treasured possessions her young mistress cared to retain, in much inward trepidation, took her first railway journey, and entered upon her new duties; sharing her well-appointed kitchen with one of Mabel's Sunday scholars.

Here Palmer, after a short time, might be discovered, ensconced in a cosy corner, wrangling, rather than conversing, one would imagine by the tones of their voices, with the sharp-tongued Cornish woman, whom the old gardener condescended to think was much more companionable than the ordinary run of women-folk. Perhaps some day they may make up their minds to a nearer acquaintance, but at present are evidently in no hurry.

Mr. Inglis never regretted his generous action in taking for partner a man whose only capital existed in his active brains, and, that the firm did not suffer under the new conditions, numerous business records bear ample testimony. As years passed he gave up daily visits, and by degrees retained only a nominal share in supervising the work going on in that hive of industry, "Inglis and Peardon's Machine factory." As for Zed, now that his energies had full scope, and his heart was at rest, there appeared to be no end to his projects for the good of his numerous employees, as well as the extension of business, and he has won the proud title of "honest and true Zedekiah Peardon." The influence he and his beautiful wife exercise over all with whom they come in contact, is always a good one.

As years passed Mr. Inglis often found the neighbourhood of "Moss Bank," singularly attractive, and thoroughly enjoyed a romp with golden-haired, blue-eyed Mabel, and sturdy dark-eyed Teddy, whose likeness to his absent uncle was very marked.

Ned Marsh, by the bye, now Captain Marsh, had discovered that his sister's friend was singularly charming; and Zenobia confided, under promise of strict secrecy, to her husband, that when he returned from his next voyage he would put his fate to the touch.

"Well done, Ned! he shows his discernment! If there had not been a Queen Zenobia to rule me, I might perhaps have been attracted there myself," was the reply.

To which Zenobia retorted, "The conceit of some people is simply colossal!" pulling the thick dark hair which retained its old trick of falling over his massive forehead.

#### AND SO FAREWELL.



## OPINIONS OF THE PRESS

O N

## EVAN MAY'S WORKS.

## PHILIP GREYSTOKE.

"In the publishers' advertisement of "Philip Greystoke" it is said: "Much of this fine novel is an exposition of how sin carries with it its own Nemesis. . . . while the social pictures are sketched with vivacity and fidelity to contemporary life." From a writer so gifted as the author of "Much in a Name" and "The Greatest of These" much was to be expected, and it may be at once said that the hopes of the most sanguine readers are realised. In "Philip Greystoke" the author set herself a difficult and a delicate task, and has performed it with remarkable success. Nobody can read the story and fail to recognise the nobility of its purpose and without being impressed by the fine feeling animating the writer."—Northern Daily Telegraph.

"In reviewing a previous novel from the same pen about two years ago, we remarked that the story "Much in a Name" would undoubtedly place Evan May in the front rank of present-day writers of fiction. The volume now before us, "Philip Greystoke," amply fulfils the rich promise of the earlier story. Evan May has grown in power, her style is even more artistic, and her presentation of character more convincing and life-like. She describes the beauties of nature with most artistic effect, and has a remarkable faculty for saying really smart things. Hundreds of bons mots are scattered throughout the pages of this book. She does not confine herself to the commonplaces of society life, but discusses with keen penetration the most pressing of modern social problems."—Aberdeen Journal.

"In "Philip Greystoke" Evan May shows the evil consequences both to sinner and sinned against, of that particular sin which is not a crime by English law, but often leads to murder or suicide. The author has displayed unusual delicacy in the working out of her plot."

March 11th, 1898.

Literary World.

"THIS is a pleasant and entertaining story. Philip Greystoke is a man who has sinned against a woman, and meets with a terrible punishment. There are many powerful scenes and effective situations that keep the interest alive, and we congratulate the author on the many merits of her story."

March 9th, 1898. Liverpool Daily Post.

"THOSE who have studied Mr. Whymper's guides, and have realised the dangers of Alpine climbing will find in this narrative numerous pictures of this fascinating, if sometimes disastrous pastime, and appreciate fully the vividness and accuracy with which they are drawn. Philip's accident in the Swiss Alps is pitiable, but it subsequently leads to pleasant results. If the writer is not a member of an Alpine Club she writes as though she were, and to say as much is to acknowledge the fidelity of her art."

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